The Literary Transmission of the Traditions of Thang-stong rGyal-po: A Study of Visionary Buddhism in Tibet

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Preface

Thang-stong rGyal-po was a Buddhist yogin and visionary of 14th to 15th century Tibet. The systems of thought and practice attributed to him were preserved by his followers, the lCag-zam ('Iron Bridge') lineage, and are presently transmitted by a number of the Tibetan Buddhist sects. Thang-stong is also a celebrated culture hero known especially as the builder of iron chain suspension bridges. His image has become the symbol of long life and good luck, and he is also held as the patron saint of the Tibetan drama tradition.

The Buddhist traditions of Thang-stong, said to have originated in his yogic and revelatory experiences, are representative of a visionary movement in Tibet distinct from the mainstream exegetical traditions that held canonical Indian Buddhism as the primary referent. Whereas the exegetes were concerned with explicating the meaning of the classical scriptures, the visionaries actively drew on meditative and revelatory realizations to produce new materials, new canonical texts, and new doctrines. The visionary movement gathered impetus in the 12th century when Tibet's traditional source of canonical material, Indian Buddhism, was quickly disappearing. Revelation provided a mode of creative input into what was becoming a static and institutionalized

religion. The visionary systems, most closely related to the Buddhist tantras, assimilated the themes, iconographical figures, and settings of the canonical texts, but presented new versions of these elements, accompanied sometimes by unique doctrinal or philosophical overtones. When accepted as authoritative, the visionary texts themselves became canonized cores for commentarial and ritual cycles.

The introduction of new scriptural material had been occurring within Buddhism almost since its beginning. Concomitant to such innovation was the need to offer theoretical justifications to establish the material's authenticity within the Buddhist context. The Tibetan visionary movement is of particular interest in that it developed explicit systematizations and doctrinal structures to accomodate this phenomena, and in many ways represented a flowering of a trend which had begun centuries earlier in India. Though often expressed in metaphorical or mythic language, the Tibetan understanding and analysis of the vision offers new insights into the nature of transic experience, inspiration, and the communication of thought in Buddhism.

The present study consists of an analysis of the traditions of Thang-stong in relation to the themes of Tibetan visionary Buddhism. Our primary questions concern the patterns of transmission of the revelatory material in literary form, the ways in which the legitimacy of these traditions was established, and the sources within Tibetan Buddhism from which the icons and doctrines of Thang-stong's visions were drawn. We have divided the study into two parts: an examination of the religious, historical and cultural contexts in which Thang-stong's Buddhist career occurred; and a survey of the visionary

systems that are attributed to him.

The extant traditions of Thang-stong have not previously been compiled, in either Western or Tibetan works. In the Introduction the materials for the study of Thang-stong and his visionary systems are reviewed, and the format in which the primary sources will be described throughout this paper is established. A full list of these sources is also compiled in the first of the bibliographies, which serves as a reference for the abbreviations that we have adopted for each of the primary texts.

Part One starts with a brief survey of Thang-stong's historical period, in which we attempt to place him in political and social perspective. In Chapter 2 a summary of the biographical accounts is presented, following the chronology of the most detailed biography, B-1. Chapter 3 provides the basis for the interpretation of the biographical accounts, and simultaneously establishes the framework for the critical investigation of the visionary systems in Part Two. We discuss the visionary movement's origins in India and Tibet, its major theoretical premises, the various types of revelation defined by the tradition, the literary genres in which the revelatory material was presented, and the relations and affiliations of the visionary systems to other Buddhist sources.

Part Two begins with Chapter 4, where each of the extant visionary traditions of Thang-stong are considered in detail. The 'Gro don mkha' khyab ma system of Avalokiteśvara meditation, his most accessible and commentated tradition, is examined in depth with regard to the history of the Avalokiteśvara cult as a whole, and the specific innovations of Thang-stong's work. The other systems are treated to

a somewhat briefer degree, with emphasis on the exigent issues related to the central vision and the codification of the literary tradition. In Chapter 5 we review the recently formulated Grub thob thugs tig, a complex doctrinal and meditative system that claims to be based on the visionary inspiration of Thang-stong rGyal-po. This group of texts affords a look at the revival of the Tibetan visionary movement in the 19th century, when the cryptic materials of previous periods were elaborated and developed into a voluminous literary tradition.

Of the two main classes of Tibetan visionary Buddhism, the systems of Thang-stong discussed in Chapter 4 consist almost exclusively of the Pure Vision type. Though texts of the Discovered Treasure class are attributed to Thang-stong in his biographies and elsewhere, none seem to be extant. We have, however, listed the references to the Discovered Treasures of Thang-stong in an appendix.

This project was undertaken with the intention of contributing to the study of an important area of Tibetan Buddhist thought that has received little attention in Western scholarship. In general, knowledge of the development of Buddhism in Tibet can be said to lag behind that concerning most other parts of Buddhist Asia. Although the literature constituting the Tibetan canon which directly translates Indic Buddhism has been utilized and catalogued by scholars of this century, a major gap remains in the area of indigenous Tibetan Buddhist literature. As may be evidenced by the numerous volumes currently appearing in United States libraries under the Library of Congress PL 480 program, there is a substantial quantity of native Tibetan literature both in the form of single works

and large encyclopedic collections, touching on all areas of Buddhist thought. However, only a few of these sources have been studied, although a recent generation of scholars here and abroad have begun to rectify the situation to some degree. One of the major difficulties is the dearth of subject catalogues and adequate overall surveys of Tibetan Buddhism. This gap may in turn be attributed partly to the fact that so much of the material deals with tantric subjects that remain largely unexplored in Buddhology as a whole. Thus an initial delineation of the relevant doctrines, issues, and course of development of the major schools seems presently to be essential for the generation of useful cataloguing systems that would lead to a general survey of the literature and to detailed research. It is with this situation in mind that a study of visionary Buddhism has been attempted, in the hopes that the description and analysis of a particular tradition might provide a window on the crucial issues for the understanding of other similar traditions.

The choice of the traditions of Thang-stong as the representative example of Tibetan visionary Buddhism is a result of a fortuitous meeting in India in 1974 with Ri-ked Grub-thob Rinpoche, the current lineage holder of the lCag-zam sect. His informed presentation of the significance of Thang-stong's work must be cited as the primary inspiration for this study. I am also indebted to the thoughtful guidance of Professor Lewis Lancaster of the Group in Buddhist Studies at the University of California at Berkeley, who through his emphasis on the development of Buddhist thought as a whole consistently directed my attention to the broad issues implicit in this material.

Special thanks are due to C. T. Shen, of the Institute for the Advanced Studies of World Religions, who kindly provided the space, time, and facilities to undertake the necessary research for this project. The erudite assistance of the Tibetan scholar sDe-gzhung Rinpoche is gratefully acknowledged, as is the information offered on numerous occasions by Lama Nor-lha and mKhan-po Tshe-dbang. My learned colleague Matthew Kapstein provided a number of valuable sources and suggestions for this study, and I am also pleased to have been able to consult with Cyrus Stearns, whose work on the biography and historical setting of Thang-stong for the University of Washington usefully complemented the scope of my own research.

Finally, a word of appreciation goes to my husband Losang, who generously offered his enthusiasm, support, and encouragement throughout the course of this project.

Introduction: Sources

Despite Thang-stong rGyal-po's considerable fame in the Tibetan Buddhist world, there have been few references to him or his lCags-zam sect in Western studies. Most of the notices have been concerned with his cultural importance and have given little indication of the literary sources for the study of this figure. Recently, data for an historical placement of Thang-stong has been introduced by several scholars, but the present study is the first to deal with his visionary systems and their position in Tibetan Buddhism.

Thang-stong as bridge builder was known in the West at least by 1783 from the travels of Samuel Turner in Bhutan.[1] The narrative of the Bogle and Manning mission to Tibet by Clements Markham reported on the bridge at Chuka.[2] Brief references can also be found in the works of L. Austine Waddell.[3] Sarat Chandra Das mentioned the main monasteries of Thang-stong's followers which he visited at the turn of this century, these remarks being an early reference to such establishments in modern times.[4]

In his extensive survey of Tibetan literature, Guiseppi Tucci described the long biography of Thang-stong in some detail.[5] Tucci seems to have been the first Western scholar to have made a study of Thang-stong using primary sources, although we find that his failure to address the premises of the Tibetan visionary movement hampered his interpretation of this material.[6]

The translation of the dBus gtsang gi gnas tren rags rim gyi

mtshan byang introduced a useful review of monasteries, monuments, and the practice of Buddhism in Central Tibet, including information on the building activities of Thang-stong.[7] In addition, the translation of parts of the 'Dzam gling rgyas bshad, which opened up the study of Tibetan religious geography, notes Thang-stong's major monasteries and other structures.[8] Thang-stong is also mentioned in several of the works of R. A. Stein, who recounts his legacy as bridge builder, "tamer of aborigines," founder of sDe-dge Monastery, and patron of the Tibetan theater (a-che lha-mo).[9] Stein summarizes the legend connecting Thang-stong to the theater, but neglects to mention his sources. This omission is unfortunate as literary corroboration of Thang-stong's role in the dramatic traditions seems to be nonexistent. A briefer discussion of Thang-stong as culture hero also occurs in Snellgrove and Richardson's survey of Tibetan cultural history.[10] Gene Smith refers to Thang-stong as "the master of Siddha,"[11] or "the Mahāsiddha who needs little introduction to those interested in Mahāyāna Buddhism."[12] This use of the tantric Buddhist terms Siddha and Mahāsiddha (grub-thob chen-po, lit. 'Great Accomplished One') reflects their traditional usage as epithets of Thang-stong in his biography and elsewhere. Smith was one of the first to report on the varying claims for Thang-stong's dates, although different conclusions have been reached recently.[13]

In the voluminous Science and Civilization in China, Thang-stong is given due credit for his bridges, one of which is analyzed in terms of physical structure.[14] Needham points out that although many iron bridges have been reported in Tibet and Bhutan, a systematic study has yet to be attempted. Also to be mentioned in this context is a

a study on bridges which details the history and structure of several of Thang-stong's works in Bhutan, based on photographs and information supplied by Monica von Schulthess.[15]

More recently, a religio-historical account of the Treasure discoverers has been presented in The Rise of Esoteric Buddhism in Tibet,[16] including a translation of a short biography of Thang-stong from bDud-'joms Rinpoche's history of the rNying-ma-pas[17] which is in turn based on an earlier biographical sketch edited by Kong-sprul.[18] Although Dargyay's survey of visionary Buddhism is wanting in a number of respects,[19] this study addresses some of the issues concerning the Old Tantras, in addition to introducing Thang-stong's role in the rNying-ma sect.

A noteworthy but unpublished study by John Ardussi deals with several of the Tibetan myths concerning Thang-stong, and contributes insights on the debate over the Siddha's dates.[20] Michael Aris's excellent historical survey of Bhutan inclues a chapter on Thang-stong and describes a generally unknown biography of him which may be the prototype for the long biography used in the present study.[21] Finally to be mentioned is a Master's thesis by Cyrus Stearns on Thang-stong rGyal-po[22] which deals with the dating problem in some depth, and presents translations of the poems and songs from Thang-stong's biographies.

Turning to native Tibetan surveys of history and religion, we find that Thang-stong's role as a spiritual figure is stressed more than his cultural contributions. However, conceptions of his position within Tibetan Buddhism vary widely. This is to be

attributed to Thang-stong's eclecticism, and the fact that his different religious systems pertain to different sects. The remarks of a particular Tibetan writer reflect his own background and predilections. For example, the dGe-lugs-pas were the least comfortable with the visionary Buddhism Thang-stong propagated, and the least apt to know of its history in detail. Thus the dGe-lugs-pa scholar Sum-pa mKhan-po, who presents a chronological list of the major events in Tibetan religious history, identifies Thang-stong as a doctor (sman-pa).[23] Sum-pa's student Thu'u-bkwan Blo-bzang Chos-nyi mentions Thang-stong's Shangs-pa affiliation, stating that he spread the Shangs teachings among the lCags-zam lineage.[24] At the other end of the spectrum, a major history of the rNying-ma school notes only Thang-stong's role as Treasure discoverer of the 'Chi med dpal ster cycle.[25]

It might be relevant to note here a few of the reasons why general information on Thang-stong is fragmentary. The first is the overriding esoteric nature of his brand of Buddhism. The "secret teachings" of Tibetan Buddhism are largely transmitted orally, and literary documentation of such teachings that does exist tends to be practical in nature. The meditation manual for the initiated practitioner is generally not written with academic posterity in mind; rather it is a genre of literature that consistently leaves aside historical detail and objective analysis, thus contributing to the mystical aura surrounding its origins. The visionary nature of Thang-stong's work and career make for special interpretative problems which will be addressed throughout this dissertation and especially in Chapter 3 below. These issues apply not only to a study of the

tradition of Thang-stong, but also to that of many other visionaries and yogis, especially of the rNying-ma school. Thang-stong's legacy is however a salient example of the esoteric trend in that his currently known corpus of literature is without even a single work on general Mahāyāna philosophy or practice.

Another factor is that Thang-stong's followers never developed a sect with political or temporal power. Although several monasteries are known to have been established by Thang-stong, it is still questionable whether the lCags-zam lineage can be considered a sect in its own right. In such cases of Tibetan Buddhism where formal establishment is absent, the preservation and advancement of its teachings is left to the abilities of the "lineage holder" and initiated practitioner. Thus, when the lineage weakens at any point, the tradition may be lost, since institutional structures to ensure the transmission are lacking. This evidently was the case for several of Thang-stong's traditions, although some of the lines were revitalized in the eclectic movement of the 19th century.

The literature originating directly in Thang-stong's own lCags-zam lineages is the most detailed and extensive source of information on this figure. In the course of our discussions of the background and content of his religious thought in the following chapters, we have listed all of the currently available materials, with the exception of the individual titles in the gSandg spyod snyan brgyud. Notwithstanding a promised collection of his works (gsung-'bum) which is yet to be completed,[26] this dissertation presents the first exhaustive compilation of this literature. Thang-stong's various visionary

systems are for the most part completely independent of each other and have been preserved by separate schools. However, many of his major traditions are to be found in the relatively recent collections of Tibetan literature. Where possible we have also identified the titles of those systems which can be shown to have existed at some point in the past.

The format we have adopted for the description of the primary bibliographical materials lists each text's title, author, most recent edition, and a brief summary of contents with page references for major topics. The publication information for the collections cited and for the individual manuscripts is to be found in the bibliographies at the end of this work. A letter and number abbreviation has been assigned to each text and sub-text, to be used in the discussions following. A title in parenthesis indicates that it is not found on the front page but is included in either an introductory statement or the colophon to the text. A part of a name in parenthesis shows that it is a descriptive title or epithet. We have reproduced the lineage lists of the text's transmission, in order to facilitate further historical study. Information from the colophon has been summarized or translated in full when relevant to the discussion.

The literature directly concerned with the tradition of Thang-stong may be divided into two groups: that describing his religious traditions, which will be the subject of Part Two of this dissertation; and the biographies of Thang-stong, which will be listed briefly below. The content of the biographical accounts is summarized in Chapter 2.

The biographies contain information on Thang-stong's religious career, cultural milieu, and engineering activities, in addition to supplying extensive lists of his visionary traditions which become useful bibliographic guides to his work. However, it must be kept in mind that the biographies were without exception written as devotional works by the Siddha's followers, who did not necessarily adhere to strict principles of historicity. The same reservation applies to the literature of his visionary systems to be discussed in Part Two below.

The following is the longest and most detailed biography of Thang-stong:

B-1: Grub pa'i dbang phyug chen po lcags zam pa thang stong rgyal po'i rnam thar ngo mtshar kun gsal nor bu'i me long gsar pa. (Alternate title: dPal grub pa'i dbang phyug brtson 'grus bzang po'i rnam par thar pa kun gsal nor bu'i me long.)

By Lo-chen 'Gyur-med bDe-chen (b. 1540). Text written in 1609.[27]

347 pp.

Colophon (pp. 344-5) states that the work was based on two older biographies of Thang-stong, one by his relative dKon-mchog bDe-ba'i 'Byung-gnas of the bSam-grub Temple, and one by his relative Ngag-gi dBang-phyug who had "hastily written a biography" close to the time that Lo-chen 'Gyur-med bDe-chen was writing B-1.

Content: Account of the events of Thang-stong's life, beginning with his fourth previous incarnation. The bulk of the text consists of reports of his travels, visionary experiences, meetings with religious and political figures, and his building activities. It also contains social information on the process of construction of major projects, travel in Tibet, and political issues. M. Aris states, "In the body of the work there appears a mass of detailed and practical information which helps to engender confidence."[28]

Lineage for the transmission of B-1 listed by Kun-bzang 'Gyur-med:[29]

Lo-chen 'Gyur-med bDe-chen
Ngag-dbang Chos-grags
bSod-nam rGyal-mtshan

Ngag-dbang bsTan-pa Rab-rgyas
Mang-thos bSod-nams Chos-'phel
gNas-gsar Legs-pa'i 'Byung-gnas
sKal-bzang rNam-grol
bsTan-'dzin Ye-shes lHun-grub
bLo-bzang bsTan-'phel
bsTan-'dzin mKhyen-rab mThu-stobs
Mkhyen-brtse'i dBang-po
Kun-bzang 'Gyur-med
Si-tu bCu-pa Chos-kyi rGyal-mtshan
rGyal-mtshan 'Od-zer

It seems that B-1's emphasis on visions, transic events, and magical feats was disappointing to Professor Tucci, the first Western scholar to mention the text. Tucci states, in part:

> This might have been one of the most important rnam-thars for Tibetan history, because the ascetic it speaks of is one of the most characteristic figures in the history of Tibetan mysticism....But our hopes proved groundless; in this biography actual facts are overcome by legends and accounts of miracles to such an extent that little can be gleaned from it of which we may be certain.[30]

We might digress briefly at this point in order to comment on Tucci's evaluation of B-1, as the question of interpretation of the primary source material is of considerable significance. In the course of this research we have found B-1 to be a useful and informative source for the study of Thang-stong. Such a study must come to terms with the assumptions and basic world view of its subject; B-1 accurately reflects the 15th century context in which Thang-stong must be placed. The numerous other Tibetan biographies, especially of Siddhas and "saints" in the same genre, are equally concerned with reports of spiritual realization and meditative experience. Claims of miraculous occurrences such as instantaneous trips to India, meetings with Buddhist teachers known to have died centuries earlier, and so forth, were integral elements of the vision in Buddhism long before the

legends concerning Thang-stong developed. Rather than being discarded for lack of historicity, such accounts should be interpreted in light of their significance in the development of Buddhist thought. It is in this sense that B-1 and the other biographies of Thang-stong have been used in the present study.

In addition to the detailed B-1, there are several short biographies of Thang-stong which appear as part of larger collections concerning members of individual sects or lineages. Three of these pieces were used in this dissertation, as each seems to represent an independent tradition for relating the events of Thang-stong's life. Other biographical sketches, particularly those included in initiation texts for the teachings of Thang-stong which will be mentioned below in Part Two, follow the outline and content of one of the main biographical traditions treated here and so will not be listed separately.

Probably the earliest of the short sketches, predating B-1, is from the gSang spyod snyan brgyud tradition:

B-2: Grub chen thang stong rgyal po'i rnam thar gcod yul nyams bzhes.

By (Ri-khrod-pa) Nam-mkha' Legs-pa.

Published in Thang stong chos mdzod, vol. 1, pp. 43-48; and in Thang stong snyan brgyud, vol. 1, p. 7.

Lineage for the transmission of the initiation (dbang) and permission to read the text (lung) (pp. 47-48; p. 7):

(the standard gSang spyod snyan brgyud lineage down to bsTan-'dsin Ye-shes lHun-grub.[31] Then;)
('Bras-ljong Thugs-sras Rin-po-che) Kun-bzang Padma Tshe-dbang
(Bla-ma dGe-slong) Blo-bzang bsTan-'phel
(from both of these to:)
bsTan -'dzin brgyad-pa) Blo-bzang mKhyen-rab mThu-stobs
'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po
sPrang-po Bla-ma 'Gyur-med

Si-tu Chos-kyi rGya-mtsho
'Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Blo-gros
Ri-ked Grub-thob Rin-po-che

Lineage for the explanation (<u>khrid</u>) of the text (p. 38; p. 7):

(Grub-dbang) rDo-rje dPal-'byor
(dGe-slong) rNam-rgyal Tshe-'phel
(rJe-btsun) Ngag-dbang dKon-mchog
(Grub-rigs) Ngag-dbang Yongs-grags, "on down".

Another short biography of Thang-stong summarizes his career from the point of view of the Shangs-pa sect:

B-3: (no title).

Published in <u>dPal ldan shangs pa bka' brgyud kyi ngo mtshar rin chen brgyud pa'i rnam thar la gsol ba 'debs pa u dum ba ra'i phreng pa</u>, ed. Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas, in <u>gDams ngag mdzod</u>, vol. 8, pp. 726-729.

The collection of Shangs-pa biographies in which that of Thang-stong appears was edited by Kong-sprul, but it is not certain which if any of these biographies were actually composed by him.[32] B-3 seems to be the closest of the short biographies to B-1 as it repeats many of the same episodes, but in briefer form. It should be noted in this regard that the author of B-1 was of the Shangs-pa sect.[23]

The rNying-ma tradition eulogizes Thang-stong and his visionary deeds as presented in Kong-sprul's edition of the biographies of Tibet's Treasure discoverers:

B-4: (no title).

By Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas.

Published in <u>Zab mo'i gter dang gter ston grub thob ji ltar byon pa'i lo rgyus mdor bsdud bkod pa rin chen bai ḍūr ya'i phreng ba</u>, by Kong-sprul, in <u>Rin chen gter mdzod</u>, vol. 1, pp. 539-542.

This text is attributed to Kong-sprul, but his work is really a compilation of older sources. B-4 was reproduced with minor changes in bDud-'jom's history of the rNying-ma-pas,[34] and in mKhas-btsun bZang-po's encyclopedia of biographies.[35] It is the same as that translated by Eva Dargyay mentioned above. The sketch concentrates on Thang-stong's role as Treasure discoverer and lists the Discovered Treasure texts that are attributed to him. It also refers to events of his life known from the other biographical traditions.

A promising source for further study is a long biography seen by Michael Aris in Bhutan:[36]

B-5: Bla ma thang stong rgyal po'i rnam thar gsal ba'i sgron me.
By dKon-mchog dPal-bzang.
Manuscript.

B-5 could not be examined during the course of this study, with the exception of a short passage concerning Thang-stong's sojourn in Bhutan and the colophon to the text[37] which had been copied out by Aris and kindly supplied to us. The colophon states that the work is based on personal interviews with Thang-stong and with two "venerable ones" (rje-tsun), A-sgron and Chos-sgron. A second colophon adds some confusion, claiming that it was composed by a Bhutanese (Mon-pa) named bDe-ba bZang-po. Aris may be correct in his suggestion that this second attribution is an interpolation by the rTa-mchog Chos-rje family which is descended from bDe-ba bZang-po. Aris also notes that both bDe-ba bZang-po and the heart-son (thugs-sras) dKon-mchog dPal-bzang were emissaries to Kamata for Thang-stong.[38] However Aris's assertion that dKon-mchog dPal-bzang is the same as the dKon-mchog dDe-ba'i

'Byung-gnas upon whose work B-1 was said to be based is questionable.[39]

B-5 is clearly one of the earliest of the biographies of Thang-stong. A comparison of the sections Aris supplied with those in B-1 covering the same period reveals a parallel story line and similar wording, indicating a close relationship between the two texts. Further comments will be reserved until B-5 is available for full study.

Two texts concerning the 'Chi med dpal ster quote a eulogistic biography (rnam-thar gsol-'debs) of Thang -stong. These brief passages present new information unknown in our available biographies,[40] and so this text, if ever located, will likely prove to represent yet another tradition concerning the events of Thang-stong's life.

The Tibetan scholar sDe-gzhung Rinpoche, currently of Seattle, Washington, reports having seen an autobiography of Thang-stong in Tibet in the early 1950's, at sDe-dge Monastery.[41]

The only known work which analyzes Thang-stong's tradition as a whole is a discussion by Kong-sprul contained within 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po's Grub thob thugs tig cycle.[42]

Finally, we might briefly note here the types of sources for the visionary systems of Thang-stong used in this study. A large portion of this material was edited by 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po (1820-1892) and Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas (1813-1899), who compiled the voluminous sGrub thabs kun btus, gDam ngag mdzod, and Rin chen gter mdzod. These collections are highly eclectic and reflect the so-called Ris-med ('no-sect') movement in which mKhyen-brtse and Kong-sprul played a major role.[43] In this movement the traditions of the visionaries of the 12th - 16th centuries such as Thang-stong were searched out and revitalized, and many rare literary cycles were probably saved from

extinction.

Thang-stong's gSang spyod snyan brgyud seems to have been preserved by its lineage and to have survived independently (but even here the line passed through mKhyen-brtse and later through his successor rDzong-gsar mKhyen-brtse Chos-kyi Blo-gros). It was edited in the 15th century, again in the 18th century, and two modern editions are currently available. One is published separately, and another forms the first three and a half volumes of a collection entitled Thang stong chos mdzod which is being published in Bhutan under the direction of Ri-ked Grub-thob Rinpoche. The latest volume of the Thang stong chos mdzod contains other independently transmitted traditions of Thang-stong.

Some confirmation of the earlier existence of the Thang-stong literature is to be found in texts of the thob-yig genre, which are lists of religious systems studied by a particular figure during his lifetime. The thob-yig of the Fifth Dalai Lama Blo-bzang rGya-mtsho mentions several of the Thang-stong traditions, thereby establishing their existence in the 17th century. Although an exhaustive study of the thob-yigs was not possible, it is probable that such texts by gTer-bdag Gling-pa, Zhu-chen Tshul-khrims Rin-chen, and others involved in the visionary movement would provide further information on the history of the traditions of Thang-stong.

The biographies of Thang-stong's contemporaries corroborate some of the statements of the traditional accounts. Further, the history of sDe-dge Monastery confirms his establishment of that institution,[44] and a catalogue of rare books by A-khu Rinpoche supplies additional information about one of Thang-stong's visionary systems.[45]

As far as oral information is concerned, it emerged that despite Thang-stong's popularity, most Tibetan scholars, considering

his traditions to be rare and obscure, are not able to offer useful information. It was especially disappointing to learn that the Tibetan Drama Group in Dharamsala, which holds Thang-stong as its patron saint, knows only of the biography B-1.

A few oral suggestions have indicated that further research with living informants in India might be fruitful. The present headman of Thang-stong's native village of 'O-ba lHa-brtse is now in Northern India, and a "Thang-stong rGyal-po family" is reported to be in Dharamsala. It is clear that the study of Thang-stong and his teachings is an open-ended project that will undoubtedly be advanced with the development of our knowledge of Tibetan religion and history.

Notes

1. Samuel Turner, An Account of an Embassy to the Court of the Teshoo Lama in Tibet, pp. 162-163. Includes an engraving of Thang-stong's bridge at Chuka by Samuel Davis.

2. Clements R. Markham, ed., Narrative of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet and of the Journey of Thomas Manning to Lhasa, pp. 20-21.

3. L. Austine Wadell, Tibetan Buddhism, p. 384, relates the myth of Thang-stong's sixty year gestation period, and mentions some of his bridges. See also his Lhasa and its Mysteries, pp. 312, 368.

4. Sarat Chandra Das, Journey to Lhasa and Central Tibet, p. 143.

5. Guiseppi Tucci, Tibetan Painted Scrolls, vol. 1, pp. 162-163.

6. See discussion below, p. 8.

7. Alfonsa Ferrari, mK'yen brtse's Guide to the Holy Places of Tibet, pp. 40, 41, 65, 71, 90, 91, 153, 155.

8. Turrell V. Wylie, The Geography of Tibet According to the 'Dzam-gling-rgyas-bshad, pp. 68, 74, 135, 146.

9. R. A. Stein, Recherches sur l'epopee et le barde au Tibet, pp. 32, 238; and Tibetan Civilisation, pp. 79, 276-277.

10. David Snellgrove and Hugh Richardson, A Cultural History of Tibet, pp. 42, 258.

11. See his introduction to Shangs pa gser 'phreng, p. 4.

12. See his introduction to Thang stong chos mdzod, vol. 1.

13. See discussion, p. 50 below, n. 7.

14. Joseph Needham, Science and Civilization in China, vol. 4, Part 3, p. 206.

15. H. H. Hauri and T. F. Peters, The Development of Suspension Bridge Construction, p. 11 seq, and illustrations.

16. Eva M. Dargyay, The Rise of Esoteric Buddhism in Tibet, pp. 153-156.

17. bDud-'joms 'Jigs-bral Ye-shes rDo-rje, Gangs ljongs rgyal bstan yongs rdzogs kyi phyi ma snga 'gyur rdo rje theg pa'i bstan pa rin po che ji ltar byung ba'i tshul dag cing gsal bar brjod pa lha dbang gyul las rgyal ba'i rnga bo che'i sgra dbyangs (hereafter abbreviated sNga 'gyur byung tshul), p. 577 seq.

18. = B-4. See below.

19. A range of problems can be cited from this work. Concerning the analysis of visionary Buddhism presented therein, see p. 91 below, n. 3. In addition, we question a number of Dr. Dargyay's translations of technical terms, such as 'New Transmission' for nye-brgyud, being easily confusable with the translation of phyi-'dar which is often rendered 'New Transmission' (cf. 'direct transmission' which has been offered as a translation of nye-brgyud in this dissertation); 'unending dynamic of being' for klong which we find overly interpretive; 'mystic' for Siddha, which would better be rendered 'master' or 'adept'; etc. On a general level, we would fault this work for assuming that rDzogs-chen originated in China without substantiating this complex issue. Minor errors such as the translation of "yong-'dzin lnga-brgya lhag" as "more than 100 teachers" (p. 153) also mar this book.

20. John Ardussi, "Some notes on the Dates of Thang-stong rGyal-po and His connection with the Development of the Rituals of Long life and the Masked Dance." See p. 50 below, n. 7.

21. Michael Aris, Bhutan: The Early History of an Himalayan Kingdom, pp. 185-190.

22. Cyrus Stearns, The Life and Teachings of the Tibetan Mahāsiddha Thang-stong rGyal-po, 'King of the Empty Plain.'

23. Sum-pa mKhan-po Ye-shes dPal-'byor, dPag bsam ljon bsang, p. 41.

24. Thu'u-bkwan Blo-bzang Chos-kyi Nyi-ma, Grub mtha' thams cad kyi khungs tshul ston pa legs bshad shel gyi me long, p. 73.

25. Kun-bzang Nges-don Klong-yangs, Bod du byung ba'i gsang sngags snga 'gyur bstan 'dzin skyes mchog rim byon gyi rnam thar nor bu'i do shal, p. 190.

26. Ri-ked Grub-thob Rinpoche, ed., Thang stong chos mdzod. Four vols. to date.

27. See p. 50 below, n. 7, for discussion of the date of composition of B-1. Lo-chen 'Gyur-med bDe-chen was descended from Thang-stong's family, and was closely linked to the Shangs-pa sect. His biography in Shangs pa gser phreng, pp. 669-670.

28. Aris, Bhutan, p. 185.

29. From SP-2, vol. 2, p. 131.

30. Tucci, Tibetan Painted Scrolls, p. 162.

31. See pp. 176-178 below.

32. According to Matthew Kapstein, personal communication, 1979, Kong-sprul is said to have based these biographies on earlier sources, which

are not identified in the text.

33. See n. 27 above.

34. bDud-'joms, sNga 'gyur byung tshul, p. 577 seq.

35. mKhas-btsun bZang-po, Biographical Dictionary of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism, vol. 3, pp. 565-568.

36. See Aris's discussion in Bhutan, p. 186 seq.

37. The colophon to B-5, from handwritten copy supplied by Michael Aris, 1979: "Oṁ ma ṇi pad me hūṁ/ tha (?) grub thob chen po'i rnam thar 'di/ lung bstan thob pa byang ngam rings pa/ dkon mchog dpal bstan thob pa byang ngam rings pa/ dkon mchog dpal bzang gis/ dpal ri bo cher skod na'ang/ grub thob chen po dang rje btsun a sgron chos sgron gnyis kyis/ chos sku snang ba mtha' yas kyi gsung rgyun/ sems can 'gro don mdzad tshul skye dran pa'i gsung 'gros/ lung bstan pa rnams mos pas thos/ lung dang 'thun par ma tshangs pa rnams kha skangs pa'o// bla ma thang stong rgyal po'i rnam thar gsal ba'i sgron me/ rgya mtsho las chu thig rtsam cig blangs nas/ lung bstan thob pa mon pa bde ba bzang pos/ wang spar 'tshams rta mchog norbu sgang gi gnas mchog/ mkha' 'gro gsang ba'i brag phug/ dben pa'i gnas su bskod pa'o// //bkra shis dpal 'bar rdzam bu gling brgyan du dge legs 'phel/ maṅgalaṁ/ A khu bla mas zhal skad mdzad mi byas/ yig mkhan sangs rgyas don grub kyis byas/ rnam thar bzhengs pa la kha phan tshig phan byas rkang gyog lag gyog byas pa thams cad sangs rgyas thob par shog// (= folios 293a-294b).

38. Reported in B-5, p. 152b.

39. This assertion seems to be based on the fact that Thang-stong's 'heart-son' (thugs-sras) dKon-mchog dPal-bzang is mentioned in B-1, p. 172 as the guardian of the bSam-grub Temple in Phag-ri, Bhutan, and that the colophon of B-1 mentions an earlier biography of Thang-stong by dKon-mchog bDe-ba'i 'Byung-gnas of the same bSam-grub Temple. Aris equates these two figures because they have the same first name and are connected to the same temple. This equasion may not be tenable. dKon-mchog dPal-bzang is twice referred to as the'heart-son' (B-1, p. 172; B-5, p. 152b) but dKon-mchog bDe-ba'i 'Byung-gnas is identified as Thang-stong's relative (gdung-gi dbon) (B-1, p. 345). In B-5, dKon-mchog dPal-bzang describes himself in the colophon as 'he who has received a prophecy' (lung-bstan thob-pa) and 'he who is from Byang Ngam-rings' (an area close to Thang-stong's birthplace) but does not say that he is related to Thang-stong. Nor does he mention the bSam-grub Temple. The latter could have been omitted for brevity, but if he was related to Thang-stong he would most likely say so. (Lo-chen 'Gyur-med bDe-chen, the author of B-1, states his relation to Thang-stong clearly, citing it as one of his qualifications as an authority on the Siddha.) A full examination of B-5 will probably settle this issue.

40. CM-1-c, p. 612; and CM-2-c, p. 440. See p. 158 below, n. 25. V-2, p. 308, also quotes an unidentified eulogistic biography. See p. 212 below.

41. Personal communication, 1979.

42. GT-I-3, p. 599 seq. See discussion below, pp. 89-90; 238.

43. For a discussion of this movement see Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas, Shes bya kun khyab mdzod, introduction by Gene Smith, p. 34 seq.

44. See p. 57 below, n. 71.

45. See p. 208 below, n. 14.

Part One: Thang-stong rGyal-po and the Visionary Milieu

Chapter 1: The Historical Setting

Thang-stong rGyal-po lived in a period of Tibetan history in which a variety of ideas and movements were solidifying. The issues and events of his day form a complex background against which we may describe his individual life and career.

The major theme of the 14th - 15th centuries was political in nature, although politics in Tibet were by this time intimately connected to religion. The thrust of the period can be summed up as a struggle for centralization. The trend traces back to the 13th century, when the Mongol conqueror Godan ordered a search of Tibet for the outstanding Buddhist figure, and was presented with the leader of the Sa-skya sect, Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan (Sa-skya Paṇḍita). In the developments that followed, the Sa-skya Lama's nephew 'Phags-pa was granted temporal power over the thirteen myriarchies in central Tibet.[1] 'Phags-pa's government was the first centralized authority since the demise of the Tibetan kingship four hundred years earlier. It also marked the first time major political power was held by a religious institution.

During this period, interaction between the Sa-skya and Karma-pa Lamas with the Yuan court set the precendent for the "lama-patron" phenomenon which continued to characterize relations between Tibet and China until the beginning of this century.[2] Tibet also began to regain the footing as a force in Asian affairs that it had

held in the 8th century, this time not as a military power but as a religious one.

The administration centralized in Sa-skya maintained control of the affiars of Tibet until the Phag-mo Gru-pa hegemony. In 1352, twelve years before Thang-stong's birth, Byang-chub rGyal-mtshan from sNe-gdong took control of the Sa-skya authority. His position was reinforced by the Mongol title 'Ta'i Situ' which was accorded him. Byang-chub rGyal-mtshan was a monk, but his Phag-mo Gru-pa government and the hegemonies that followed did not have the same religious stature as did Sa-skya. Still, the struggle for power, i.e., power over a unified Tibet, continued and was the major political concern throughout Thang-stong's lifetime.

The Phag-mo Gru-pas were soon overshadowed by the Rin-spungs clans, and they in turn by the ruling families of Tsang. During the 15th century, the principal factions were sectarian rather than geographic or familial. The dGe-lugs-pas fought the 'Bri-gung-pas and the Karma-pas; monasteries were attacked and siezed on both sides. At the same time, independent Mongolian tribes on Tibet's borders alternately formed a threat, and a useful military force, which was employed to the advantage of some of the parties. The final centralization of Tibet occurred when the Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngag-dbang Blo-bzang rGya-mtsho, consolidated the various factions in the 17th century, about 150 years after Thang-stong's death.

Along with centralization came a new social consciousness in Tibet's leaders. One manifestation of this trend was a growing concern for easy transit and communication in order to efficiently rule large areas. During the Phag-mo Gru-pa period major advances in roads

and wayfare stations were made. Thang-stong rGyal-po's own role in this technological development as bridge builder contributed to these political aims, as well as to his stated personal goals of making religious pilgrimage easier and alleviating some of the hardships of sentient beings.

An aspect of the growing political awareness of the Tibetan religious institutions was the development of a new mode for the conferral of religious power. The Buddhist belief in reincarnation was extended to include the possibility of locating and recognizing a new born reincarnated master (sprul-sku, Skt. nirmāṇakāya) who resumed the power and activity of his predecessor. The precedent was set by the recognition of Karma Pakṣi's reincarnation in the 13th century.[3] By the end of Thang-stong's era the continuity of an authoritative spiritual succession was established for the Dalai Lamas as well.

During this period of political evolution Tibet won its independence from the Mongol overlordship. In 1368, four years after Thang-stong's birth, the Ming dynasty gained ascendencey in China. A more casual relationship followed between Tibet and the new Chinese court, Tibetan Lamas of various sects continuing their role of spiritual advisor, but lacking the temporal position they had in the Yuan period.[4] Disciples of Tsong-kha-pa went to China, as did the fourth Karma-pa De-bzhin bShegs-pa.

In Thang-stong's lifetime monasteries with real political power were already well established. Most prominent had been the Sa-skya center. The 'Bri-gung seat as well as that of the sTag-lung-pas, both established by the late 12th century, also figured when Prince Godan received his report of the major Tibetan Buddhist

hierarchs of the 13th century.[5] By the late 14th century, however, the importance of the Sa-skya and the various bKa'-brgyud centers was being overshadowed by the new dGe-lugs-pa sect. While such figures as the sixth Karma-pa mThong-ba Don-ldan and the 'Bri-gung hierarch continued to be active, the new reforming spirit of the dGe-lugs-pas was the prominent force of the period. Tsong-kha-pa Blo-bzang Grags-pa[6] arrived in Central Tibet from Amdo in 1372, eight years after Thang-stong's birth, and proceeded to set up the sMon-lam service in Lhasa under the auspices of Phag-mo Gru-pa Grags-pa rGyal-mtshan. In 1409 he established dGa'-ldan Monastery, followed in 1416 by the establishment of 'Bras-dpung by Tsong-kha-pa's disciple 'Jam-dbyangs Chos-rje, and in 1419 by the establishment of Se-ra Monastery by another disciple, 'Jam-chen Chos-rje. The dGe-lugs-pas continued their ascendency politically and religiously, and Thang-stong's era also saw the building of the bKra-bshis lHun-po Monastery by the first Dalai Lama, and the center at Chab-mdo in 1440. Although the full rule of the dGe-lugs-pas was not established until two centuries later, the movement was already welcomed and popular.

Other religious events of the time include the building of Ngor Ewaṁ Chos-ldan Monastery by Kun-dga' bZang-po in 1434, 'Phan-yul Nalentra Monastery by Rong-stong Shes-bya Kun-rig in 1437, rTa-nag Thub-bstan Monastery by Go-ram bSod-nams Seng-ge in 1474, and sDe-dge lHun-grub Monastery by Thang-stong rGyal-po himself in 1467.

A close reading of Thang-stong's biography B-1 yields evidence of many of these major events and figures, presenting anecdotes of the Siddha's own role in this period. He met and interacted with both political and spiritual luminaries. An exhaustive study of these

incidents undoubtedly would provide historical insights; however the scope of this essay is limited to an analysis of such events from the point of view of their influence on Thang-stong's personal life.

Thang-stong's pervasive style was that of the wandering yogi, the crazy mystic. His approach towards the increasingly centralized authority appears idiosyncratic and rebellious, and his attitude less than submissive. When Thang-stong was in sNe-gdong, the Phag-mo Gru-pa ruler Grags-pa rGyal-mtshan requested teachings, to which the Siddha replied that greedy, power-thirsty rulers could never keep the necessary commitments to practice Buddhism. The leader then promised to renounce stealing and fighting, upon which Thang-stong conceded to grant an Avalokiteśvara initiation.[7] When Thang-stong came to the camp of the sixth Karma-pa mThong-ba Don-ldan (1416-1453), he performed austerities in the area. This must have offended the monks, who threw stones and beat him. The Karma-pa intervened, and invited the Siddha into his tent. Thang-stong then bestowed initiations and teachings.[8]

It is interesting to compare the accounts of Thang-stong's contact with the Chinese emperor to the pomp and formality of the Tibetan institutional hierarchs who were courting Chinese favor. The Siddha's behaviour is indicative of his attitude towards politics in general. Thang-stong came to the Chinese capitol after visiting Mt. Wu-tai-shan (Tib. Ri-bo rTse-lnga). The emperor is said to have appeared outside of the palace with his attendants. Thang-stong refused to bow like the others, and stayed seated on a rock under a tree. His words to the ruler were:

> In your previous life,
> You gave a little charity—

Thus you have been born as emperor of China.
But being the leader of the masses is the cause for suffering.
All you sinful kings
Quickly become firewood in hell.
The luxuries collected as tribute
Afterwards become the basis for calamity.
Cast out of this beautiful, attractive palace,
You will go alone, without friends.

Although you pride yourself on being great,
You are a sentient being.
Although I stay alone,
I am not your subject.
I am the king — you bow to me![9]

The emperor's advisors questioned Thang-stong on how he could consider himself a king, and what advice he would have on ruling. The Siddha answered with a song describing the true kingdom as the realm of the Dharma:

I stay alone, as the Dharma Body (dharmakāya).
I manage the Dharma Body like this:
In my self-made spontaneous palace,
The king of the Five Bodies is the Five-fold Wisdom.
The queen is Self-made Wisdom...,

...etc., thus bringing his yogic message to the Chinese court. Later in his life Thang-stong did send offerings to the Chinese "king" dPal-gi 'Byung-gnas[10] along with an appeal for the fostering of Buddhism in China.

Stories of Thang-stong's scorn for pretense and avarice abound in B-1, but it would be incorrect to conclude that he advocated reclusiveness and retreat from the world. Although he spent years in meditation, his involvement with secular life is never denied, and in particular his engineering endeavors demonstrate his continued commitment to public service. On a few occasions, his mystic abilities were utilized by the ruling families, as when he was consulted for a prediction and allegedly foretold the downfall of the Ta'i Situ line

in two generations after the Ta'i Situ lHa-btsan-skyabs.[11]

The visionary trend of the Treasure discoverers (gter-ston) profoundly affected Thang-stong. The movement, which seems to have begun in the 11th century, was fostered by such figures as Nyang-ral Nyi-ma 'Od-zer (of Maṇi bka' 'bum fame) of the 12th century and Guru Chos-dbang of the 13th century. The acceptance of visionary discoveries of Buddhist texts was widespread by Thang-stong's era. The famed rGod-kyi lDem-'phru-can, founder of the Northern Treasure cycle, was the Siddha's elder contemporary, as were Sangs-rgyas Gling-pa and rDo-rje Gling-pa. B-1 records that Thang-stong studied their visionary works; undoubtedly he was inspired by the notion of transic communication, transcending spatial and temporal bounds, with the celestial Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

The Treasure discoverers were tied to the rNying-ma school which during Thang-stong's life made significant advancements. The prolific Klong-chen Rab-'byams-pa[12] died in the year that Thang-stong was born. The collection of the Old Tantras (rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum) was redacted by Ratna Gling-pa (1403-1478), just during the height of Thang-stong's visionary period.

From his interaction with the rNying-ma-pa establishments it is clear that Thang-stong accorded this tradition the higest respect, a stance that contrasts considerably with his irreverent attitude towards the politically powerful monastic institutions. The Jo-khang Temple in Lhasa, with its revered Jo-bo rJe image of the Buddha, was a reference point for Thang-stong throughout his life; he returned to the statue numerous times and his visionary communication with it is said to have guided his life. bSam-yas Monastery, the major

center for the rNying-ma-pas since the 8th century, was the site of Thang-stong's Treasure discoveries, lectures, and retreat periods.

Thang-stong's debt to the rNying-ma-pas and other Tibetan religious traditions will be explored in the following chapters. It is these traditions, and especially the visionary movement, that for him were the most significant and influential elements of his period.

Notes

1. See C. W. Cassinelli and Robert B. Ekvall, A Tibetan Principality: The Political System of Sa-skya; and, Li An-che, "The Sakya Sect of Lamaism."

2. See W. D. Shakabpa, Tibet, A Political History, chapters 4-6; and, Hugh E. Richardson, A Short History of Tibet, p. 33 seq.

3. See Hugh Richardson, "The Karmapa Sect: A Historical Note."

4. Informative for this period are dPa'-bo gTsug-lag Phreng-ba, mKhas pa'i dga' ston; Pad-ma dKar-po, Thub bstan pad ma rgyas pa'i nyin 'byed; and Ngag-dbang Blo-bzang rGya-mtsho, rDzogs ldan gzhon nu'i dga' ston. See also Elliot Sperling, "The Fifth Karmapa and some aspects of the relations between Tibet and the early Ming."

5. Shakabpa, Tibet, p. 61, states that during this period the 'Bri-khung-pas were considered the most wealthy, the sTag-lung-pas the most sociable, and the Sa-skya-pas the most religious.

6. See mKhas-grub dGe-legs dPal-bzang, Dad pa'i 'jug gnas (biography of Tsong-kha-pa). See also Alex Wayman, Calming the Mind and Discerning the Real, p. 155 seq.

7. B-1, pp. 117-118. It is interesting to note that Grags-pa rGyal-mtshan's reign is said to have been marked by peace and prosperity. See Shakabpa, Tibet, pp. 83-86.

8. B-1, p. 121.

9. B-1, p. 230. No corroboration of the event to be found in the other biographies of Thang-stong. This figure is only referred to as 'Chinese King' (rgya-nag rgyal-po).

10. B-1, p. 293. We have not been able to identify this figure. His Tibetan name translates 'Source of Glory'.

11. See B-1, pp. 272-273.

12. For a summary of his life and work, see Herbert Guenther, Kindly Bent to Ease Us, Part One, introduction.

Chapter Two: Summary of the Biographical Accounts

The biographies introduce Thang-stong with two main attributions: Thang-stong as the embodiment of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, or Avalokiteśvara and his wrathful aspect Hayagrīva combined;[1] and Thang-stong as the reincarnation of Padmasaṁbhava.[2] Throughout his life, he is identified as an incarnation or emanation of other figures as well, both historical and of the celestial pantheon, but the two primary attributions are made most often, and figure prominently in the general legend of Thang-stong. His connection to Avalokiteśvara is based on his alleged visionary communications with the Bodhisattva and his propagation of the Avalokiteśvara mantra. He is portrayed as Padmasaṁbhava beause of his discovery of Treasure texts; such an attribution is made for most of the Tibetan Treasure discoverers.[3] Further, it is said that in a Discovered Treasure of Padma Gling-pa, Padmasaṁbhava predicted that he would be born as Thang-stong rGyal-po so that the Tibetan people would "have a little happiness."[4]

Like many Buddhist figures, Thang-stong is said to have been cultivating enlightenment for innumerable aeons. B-1 offers details on his four immediately preceeding lives. The first was as an Indian prince referred to by the Tibetan name Grags-pa 'Od-zer. The prince succumbed to his parents' wish that he rule the kingdom, but he vowed to spend future lives solely as a practitioner of Buddhism. In the next life he was a Buddhist nun. The next was as a teacher called

Rong-stong Chen-po who built temples and libraries, and lived on the border between lHo (Mustang) and Tibet. Finally, in the life immediately previous, Thang-stong is claimed to have been Kun-mkhyen Dol-po, the historical Jo-nang-pa master of the Kālacakratantra and major architect of the 'other emptiness' (gzhan-stong) philosophical position, who lived from 1291-1361.[5] This claim is also made in B-3 as well by Kong-sprul.[6] The assertion is probably attributable to the fact that Thang-stong's successors, many of whom were Jong-nang-pas, were attempting to link the two lineages. It may be noted that Dol-po-pa's death occurs in the same year that is traditionally held to be Thang-stong's birth date.

The birth of Thang-stong is placed in the "ox year," which is most likely the "iron ox year" of 1361.[7] He was born in 'O-ba lHa-rtse, a village of herdsmen and cultivators, in the La-stod region of western Tibet.[8] His mother, called Indian Queen (rGya-gar lHa-mo) is said to have been a Ḍākinī, with many peculiarities such as a small beard and odd freckles, but with a strong predilection towards religion. His father rDo-rje rGyal-mtshan was from Mi-nyag in eastern Tibet, and was stern and suspicious.

B-1's description of Thang-stong's birth is reminiscent of other Buddhist legends. Preceeded by his mother's auspiciously symbolic dreams, he was born on the tenth day of the tenth month after conception.[9] B-1 states that the baby immediately uttered the Avalokiteśvara mantra oṁ maṇi padme hūṁ, which indicated his advanced state of realization. The infant then proceeded to refute his father's pessimistic interpretation of the auspicious signs accompanying his birth. Soon after, the Northern Treasure master Kun-spangs Don-yod

rGyal-mtshan was invited for astrological advice.[10] Kun-spangs suggested that the boy be named Glorious Wrath (Khro-bo dPal-ldan). Signs and dreams indicated that he was an emanation of Padmasaṁbhava, and destined to be a great man.

The incidents related of his early life consist of a combination of eccentric behavior and demonstrations of inborn spiritual knowledge. He is said to have been able to dress himself at the age of one month. At seven months, he sat in meditation, staring into space for twenty-one days. When he was five he was sent to tend the flocks, but went instead to a lecture on Buddhism by Kun-spangs-pa. He was seen giving initiations to sheep and goats. When his elementary school teacher tried to send him home for refusing to write anything but the Buddhist refuge prayer, he revealed his full knowledge not only of all Tibetan scripts but also of Lañza, Vartu, and the symbolic script of the Ḍākinīs. Later he was trained in agricultural skills, but always managed to anger his superiors with his carelessness in mundane matters and his insistence on charity and spiritual concerns.

A combination of this lack of practicality and his mother's Buddhist leanings must have overcome his father's worldly ambitions for the boy, for he was finally sent to study religion. At this point he experienced his first vision of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, who urged him to renounce the worldly life.

He received the initial 'going forth' ordination (pravrajyā) at Byang-sdings from the monk Nyi-ma Seng-ge. His name was changed to Diligent Lion (brTson-'grus Seng-ge), and his Buddhist studies began. At Byang-ngam-ring[11] he is said to have studied the Abhisamayālaṁkāra with dKon-mchog-dar, the Five Treatises of

Maitreya, the Pramāṇavārtikka under Blo-gros rDo-rje, the Vinaya, and the Adhidharma. He also studied at mNga'-ris Zhel-dkar.[12]

At Sa-skya he is said to have confronted conceited and hypocritical students with a song proclaiming the ultimately inexpressable 'spontaneously-arisen bliss' (lhan-cig skyes-pa'i bde-ba).[13] He began to be called an iconoclast and an anti-intellectual. B-1 notes that such talk did not affect him; a special inner knowledge was dawning in his awareness and he was as unconscious of criticism as an elephant crazed from drink.[14] It was at this time that his named changed again, from Diligent Lion to Diligent Madman (brTson-'grus sMyon-pa).

The novice returned home, but it seems he was already inextricably committed to an unorthodox lifestyle marked by meditation, visionary experience, constant travelling, and spontaneous interaction with strangers in order to convince them to adopt Buddhism. He also found himself attracted to construction projects and helped whenever he could.[15]

His uncle, Lama Grags-bzang, gave him an Avalokiteśvara initiation and other teachings. Thang-stong then set off in the direction of mNga'-ris. He miraculously saved a large group of people and animals from a snow blizzard. He visited the Jo-bo image, and experienced his first major vision and prophetic communication concerning his destiny to live a long life and become a "saviour of beings." His confidence and commitment to the lifestyle of the Tibetan "crazy yogi" must have been growing. He declared to the group of traders with whom he was travelling, "I am a madman with no direction."[16]

He decided that monkhood was the best way to practice Buddhism, even tantric Buddhism.[17] He travelled to mDo-stod sKya-ra Monastery and met the monk bKa'-lnga-pa dPal-'byor Shes-rab, said to be an emanation of Avalokiteśvara, and an expert in the tantras.[18] As such he must have been well suited for Thang-stong's particular needs. bKa'-lnga-pa perceived Thang-stong as an incarnation of Kukuripa.[19] He ordained Thang-stong as a full Buddhist monk (bhikṣu), accepted him as a disciple, and changed his name from Diligent Madman to Diligent Good Man (brTson-'grus bZang-po).

bKa'-lnga-pa taught a refuge liturgy inspired by his vision of Avalokiteśvara, entitled Ma Nam-mkha'-ma:

> All mother-like beings, equal (in number to the extent of the) sky,
> Take refuge in the guru, the precious Buddha,
> Take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Assembly of Followers,
> Take refuge in the guru, chosen deity, and the Ḍākinī,
> Take refuge in their own minds, empty and clear, the Dharma Body.[20]

Thang-stong adopted this prayer, perhaps because of its connection to his patron Bodhisattva, and it has become a hallmark of the lCags-zam tradition.

bKa'-lnga-pa also instructed Thang-stong in the teachings of Mahāmudrā, Gaṅgāma, Nāropa, Niguma, the dMar-khrids, and the Six Practices (sbyor-drug) of the Kālacakra system.[21]

His study with the bKa'-lnga-pas was followed by a period under the tutorship of Chos-rje Lha-gdong-pa bSod-nams mChog-pa, with whom he studied subjects of the rNying-ma-pa tradition.

He next returned to Kun-spangs Don-yod rGyal-mtshan, the Lama consulted by his mother at his birth, who was now at Ri-bo bKra-bzang.[22] B-1 reports that as Thang-stong was approaching Kun-spangs's residence, the Lama simultaneously perceived in a vision that an incarnation of

Padmasaṁbhava was coming to be his student. He also is said to have foreseen that Thang-stong would discover a Treasure system concerning life extension techniques.[23] Kun-spangs taught Thang-stong material related to the Northern Treasure (byang-gter) cycle, the rDzogs-chen, and the Māyājālatantra.[24]

Kung-spangs-pa also gave Thang-stong instructions on the procedure for retiring for long periods of meditation. Thang-stong began his first retreat. During this time he had a vision of Padmasaṁbhava, who declared Thang-stong to be in the tradition of the Indian Siddhas such as Saraha, Virūpa, and Tilopa. The vision is said to have convinced Thang-stong of the superiority of the tantric path (mantrayāna) over all other Mahāyāna teachings.[25]

This was a crucial point in Thang-stong's life. It seems his life took an irreversible turn into the visionary wold. Emerging from his retreat, he is said to have been approached by a black man with a crow's face. He was taken on a magical journey[26] to Nepal to meet Paṇḍita Mahābodhi[27] with whom Thang-stong was told he had former "karmic connections." An extensive account of a journey to the Indian sub-continent follows, but it is unclear as to whether a visionary or an actual event is being related. We have no evidence of Thang-stong's travel in India other than the statements of his biographies. B-1 itself alternates between what is explicitly visionary language (e.g. describing the method of travel as "magical") and what seems to be an attempt to establish historicity (as when factual descriptions of places and people's ages are given). It is difficult to determine with any certainty whether Thang-stong did in fact tour India and Nepal, experiencing various visions in the process, or whether the

entire journey is a metaphorical retelling of a transic event.

He is said to have arrived at Svayaṁbhū "in an instant." He visited the local pilgrimage sites such as the Bodha stūpa. At the same time, Mahābodhi had a vision that a "dark, sweet-smelling yogi" from Tibet was approaching. Thang-stong met the Nepalese teacher and received an initiation into the Cakrasaṁvara tantra. He continued on to Benares, where he studied for five years with Dharmaratna, student of the renown Mitrayogin.[28] Then Thang-stong had another series of visions augering what are counted by the biographies as his major accomplishments: his conversion of "barbarians;" his magical repulsion of the invading Hor-pa tribes on Tibet's borders; his "control" of the Chinese emperor; and his building of bridges.

At Ri-bya rKang-can he studied "three types of yoga" with Kusali Kun-dga' sNying-po. At Nalanda he met a 230 year old Siddha named Atikara who initiated him into the maṇḍala of Amitāyus. On the island of Zang-gling Thang-stong found a stūpa of the bkra-shis sgo-mangs type which became the prototype for his later constructions. The Siddhas Śabari[29] and Kukuripa "appeared" and gave Thang-stong further teachings and instruction on stūpa building. At a cave near Benares he studied rNying-ma teachings with sKal-ldan rDo-rje.[30]

Thang-stong is said to have emerged from his journey 18 years later when he returned, again by magic, to his birthplace in Rin-chen-sdings. He met his friends and family who, it is added, did not believe his wondrous accounts of his travels.

Thang-stong continued his quest for teachings and visions in Tibet. He studied the systems of the Shangs-pa sect stemming from the Indian yoginī Niguma with Byang-sems sByin-pa bZang-po. Then

he began another retreat period. B-1 reports that one day, while thinking that it might be possible to receive a Whispered Transmission (snyan-brgyud), he heard a voice from the sky saying, "Hey, yogi-boy!"[31] It was Niguma herself, and she instructed Thang-stong in the essentials of her tradition. This vision is cited as the basis for Thang-stong's Shangs-pa writings.[32]

We learn from B-1 that Thang-stong's mother died soon after the vision of Niguma. As was the custom, he built stūpas, and had scriptures written in gold ink, and paintings made of the eight Tathāgatas. The occasion is identified as his first major construction of receptacles (brtan) for Buddhist veneration. It is said that after the death of his mother, Diligent Madman had not even a trace of concern for worldly profit.[33] He left his property in the care of others, and went into retreat on the western side of Mt. 'O-ba lHa-rtse.

He remained on the mountain for seven years. During this period he is supposed to have written treatises on durable materials and hidden them for future generations to discover.[34] He became famouse as the "Treasure Master of Mt. 'O-ba," and local pilgrims came to receive refuge prayers and "maṇi empowerments." One such group, however, discovered that the wise man was only Diligent Madman from their village, and promptly discarded the revered teachings they had just received. This rather humorous episode illustrates how Thang-stong's reputation as a spiritual master was counterbalanced by his reputation as a mad eccentric.

It was during these years that Thang-stong experienced his major vision of Avalokiteśvara which became the basis for the 'Gro don mkha' khyab ma system, and the standard reference for his intimate

association with the Bodhisattva.[35]

After this seven year period, he cut his remaining ties to worldly life. Converting his property into gold, he set out to wander through the countryside.

The next years were spent in search of Buddhist learning. Studying at Thar-pa Gling with mChog-bzang Legs-pa'i Blo-gros, he received instruction in Mahāmudrā, the Yi-ge Med-pa cycle, and the lHan-cig sKyes-sbyor. At Gangs-bu-le'i dByi-lung dGa'-ldan-rtse, he met the Sa-skya-pa scholar Re-mda'-pa[36] and received teachings on Yamāntaka. He also studied the Jo-nang version of the Kālacakra-tantra and the Six Practices (sbyor-drug) with sLe-kha-pa Shes-rab bZang-po.

He continued to practice meditation in various retreat centers and cemeteries. While thusly engaged on the rGyas-sde Plain,[37] another vision is reported to have occurred which has become a popular legend for the origin of the name Thang-stong rGyal-po. The episode also illustrates his intrest in the cult of the Ḍākinīs. The story goes that he began to notice many human-like girls who, dancing and singing, kept approaching him. It was the Five Wisdom Ḍākinīs,[38] dressed in silks, jewels, and bone ornaments, and they asked the Siddha if there was anything he needed. Then they proceeded to sing this song eulogizing Thang-stong's yogic achievements and realizations:

For this wonderful man
Who is sitting on the sGyas-sde Plain,
We five girls who have gathered here
Will each give him an appropriate name.

On the great spreading plain,
The yogin who understands emptiness
Sits like a fearless king.
Thus we name him King of the Empty Plain (Thang-stong rGyal-po).

In the land of equanimity lacking any extreme,
The one whose view doesn't distinguish form and void
Is the madman who is beyond acceptance or rejection.
We name him Madman of the Empty Land.

Whether food and drink of one hundred tastes,
Or filthy vomit is available,
He digests it, regardless of benefit or harm.
We name him He Who Digests All Foods.

Whatever varying circumstances arise,
He understands them to be like a dream or echo,
And suppressing the eight dharmas, equalizes (all).[38a]
We name him Equalizer of All Circumstances.

All phenomena in Saṁsāra and Nirvāṇa,
Although appearing, are like the moon in the water.
He who well knows all to be undependable,
We call All Phenomena Undependable.

The time has come
For this uncontested yogin
To lead all beings on the plain of bliss
In order to increase his unlimited activity.[39]

During this period, Thang-stong seems to have thoroughly assumed the role of the eccentric yogi and visionary. He discovered his first major Treasure text, the Thugs sgrub yang gsang bla med, at Gram-pa-rgyan. Passing through Jo-nang, he was recognized to be the reincarnation of Kun-mkhyen Dol-po-pa. He continued on through Bo-dong, Sha-ba, and sNar-thang, his interactions with the Lamas and others he met increasingly on the visionary plane. At 'Obs-kha he received a Vajrayoginī initiation after recognizing a fifteen year old girl to be an incarnation of that Ḍākinī. At Sha-lu, a Lama leading a baby monkey granted him a Hevajra initiation and the Sa-skya teachings of the rGyud-gsum.

After a trance experience in the presence of the Jo-bo statue in Lhasa, he returned to his native area of Rin-chen-sdings. With the inspirational prompting of Tārā he stipulated a nearby mountain

to be the future seat of his followers the lCag-zam-pas, and named it Ri-bo-che.[41]

He entered a six year retreat and had a vision of the Ḍākinī Seng-dgong-ma.[42] At her behest, he travelled magically to Keng-rus Me-'bar, a cemetery in India, where he received teachings from the Siddha Virūpa. He returned to the Thar-pa Gling retreat center in Tibet and had a vision of Vajradhara which is considered to be the basis for Thang-stong's Vajradhara guruyoga system.[43] He took another magical journey to the Ramadole Cemetery.[44] Then he lived for several months in a "palace of Cakrasaṁvara" in Mon. On his return to Tibet he passed through a haunted forest, and received teachings on the Gur-gyi mGon-po (Pañjara Mahākāla) from a vision of Bram-ze mChog-sred.[45]

Thang-stong determined that his next vision would be of Urgyan (Uḍḍiyāna). In order to reach that land he prayed to Padmasaṁbhava, and found himself transported south to an area near Siṅgala Srin-mo'i Gling.[46] He met Padmasaṁbhava, surrounded by hundreds of Ḍākinīs, on Zang-mdog dPal-ri Mountain, and received teachings on the bKa'-brgyad and the rDzogs-chen.[47] Padmasaṁbhava proclaimed Thang-stong to be his emanation. He urged the Siddha to return to Tibet to search for the five Discovered Treasure systems that were his 'Dharma-lot' (chos-skal)[48] and to build the bridges and structures that were his destiny.

This vision augered the end of Thang-stong's mystical journeys around the Indian sub-continent. From this point on it can be observed that his life, as portrayed in B-1, took on a practical and external orientation. He was no longer exclusively engaged in

receiving teachings, and seems to have been confident that his visionary education was complete. His subsequent encounters with other religious figures were on an equal footing. He also became aware of social and political matters.

An illustrative passage from B-1 describes this period. While he was waiting for the "proper sign"to appear for him to begin building bridges, he attempted to cross the sKyi-chu River. He was refused passage on a ferry because of his eccentric appearance, and later witnessed the suffering of others that resulted from the primitive methods of passage. Soon after this incident, a student promised him "a sincere offering of body, speech, and mind" if Thang-stong would accept him as a disciple. Thang-stong considered this offer to be an auspicious symbol of the devoted labor he would require from his followers to accomplish his engineering projects, and responded thusly:

> Since I have received deep and wide Dharmic methods, similar to an ocean, from learned and accomplished masters in both India and Tibet, it is my intention to fill all the lonely valleys of this Land of Snow Mountains with hermitages, and to set up an unrivalled banner of the teaching of the lineage practice.[49]

> Now, the auspicious circumstance of this teaching (request) and offering (of body, speech, and mind) is as follows: I am grounded in the precious utterance of the six syllables. I (want) all the sentient beings that are seen, heard, thought of, or touched, to enjoy the glory of a good birth[50] and to be established on the highest level, the definitely auspicious insurpassible enlightenment. Therefore I will labor with earth, stone, and wood. I will build as many chapels and receptacles for body, speech, and mind as possible in key spots[51] beneficial to the people of the Snow Land, in lonely places to protect against the fears of robbers and demon bandits, and in the narrow paths and water ways where gods, ghosts, and men travel. And (I will build) ferries and precious firm iron bridges on all the great rivers. Thus this auspicious circumstance is leading towards so much happiness for all beings.

> Saying that one offers body, speech and mind is grounded in the conditioned merit of all my followers, and (signifies) the coming together of the right circumstances for the understanding of the unconditioned Dharma realm (dharmadhātu).[52]

Numerous passages of this sort in B-1 show Thang-stong's growing conviction that the building of bridges, stūpas, and images was inseparable from his commitment to the Bodhisattva ideal.

Soon after the vision of Urgyan, he uncovered the Urgyan thugs kyi yang thig kun bzang dgongs pa tshig 'dus Treasure text at Zla-ba Phug, according to envisioned directions from Vajradhara. This was followed by his discovery of a cache of Treasure texts at bSam-yas mChims-phu, revealed by the light of Amitāyus.[53]

He went to sNe-gdong and rebuked the Phag-mo Gru-pa ruler Grags-pa rGyal-msthan (1433-1474) for excessive greed and hypocrisy. He delivered a similar message at the sixth Karma-pa mThong-ba Don-ldan's camp after the monks there beat him for performing ascetic practices.

He also became involved in struggles with the local demons, nāgas, and spirits, and coerced them to abandon their destructive activities. B-1 emphasizes Thang-stong's numerous battles with the nāga king Chu-bdag Varuṇa Se-so, who eventually vowed to refrain from obstructing boats and the building of bridges.

In order to begin his iron works, he went to Kong-po in southeastern Tibet, and inquired from the local smiths on the method to construct a bridge and the amount of weight each link could hold. Travelling into an unexplored area to the south of Kong-po, he asked the residents for the "keys" and maps to the region. He was told that this information was hidden in a secret cave of the Ḍākinī Vajravārāhī.

He performed various rituals near the cave, and a copper box fell out of a crack in the rock. It contained maps of Kong-po and the Land of the Barbarians (Klo-yul), special instructions for building auspicious structures, and prophecies, all of which was said by the local residents to have been hidden by Padmasaṁbhava. B-1 asserts that this incident marked the "opening up" of Kong-po.[54]

Thang-stong discovered a mine of iron ore in this area, and built a temple next to it.[55] Local blacksmiths offered their services and the lord Don-grub rGyal-po granted 13 porters. Others brought small caches of iron of their own. They began the process of pounding the metal into links. Meanwhile, sceptics, doubtful that an iron chain bridge was possible, chastized the workers for wasting the rare iron of Tibet, and Thang-stong had to display his magical powers in order to maintain credibility. This was a pattern often to be repeated during his engineering projects.

Thang-stong's conversion of the cannibals of Klo took place after getting his ironworks under way in Kong-po. The detailed account of his journey in B-1 tells us that his travel guide was a native of Klo called Klo-pho Reng-po, whom Thang-stong had met in Kong-po.[56] Thang-stong himself was "armed with Buddhist accoutrements and scriptures, the beneficent spirits, and most of all an unshakable compassion." After a few months in the forest spent in meditation, Thang-stong walked into the midst of a large village of cannibals, holding a statue of Buddha in one hand and blowing a conch shell with the other. Alarmed at the strange sight, the people tried to kill him but Thang-stong is said to have paralysed them by pointing a fierce gesture (mudrā) at them, growling, and staring in a frightening manner. While

in this helpless state the cannibals were subjected to a lecture on Buddhism and instruction on the chanting of om̐ maṇi padme hūm̐.

The cannibals of Klo are said to have eventually been converted to Buddhism and to have become devoted disciples of Thang-stong. He remained in their area for two years, and upon leaving promised to send a monk representative to them each year. His "taming of the barbarians" is counted by all of the biographies as one of his major acts. B-1 declares that this deed is comparable to King Srong-btsan sGam-po's establishing Buddhism in Tibet.[57]

Thang-stong returned to Lhasa and began building bridges. B-1 specifies that Thang-stong was seventy years old (which means that he was sixty-nine),[58] and that the year was the "male iron dog" (1430).[59] Thang-stong is traditionally held to have built fifty-eight bridges.[60] The first was over the sKyi-chu River and was sponsored by his female patron sKal-bzang. This was followed by the construction of two bridges in sTod-lung, and another over the rTa-mchog Kha-'bab River when he was seventy-two, in 1433. In the same year he built a "repository for the bKa'-'gyur and bsTan-'gyur" at dPal Chu-bo-ri, which became the site of his main monastery, near Lhasa.[61]

He also continued the visionary activity of earlier years. He discovered ten rolls of texts at Pa-sgro.[62] He took a magical journey to the rNgam-pa sGra-grags cemetery in Mon and practiced gCod for five days in order to subdue the local ghosts and demons. Returning to Tibet, he resumed his bridge building at 'U-'dul, 'Dzom, and Bag-grong.

B-1 briefly mentions Thang-stong's receipt of teachings in a vision of Vajravārāhī at Rameśvara at this time, which probably refers

to his formulation of the gSang spyod snyan brgyud system.[63]

This period marks Thang-stong's increasing contact with other religious luminaries, such accounts indicating the wide range in Tibetan Buddhism in which he is considered to have participated. We learn from B-1 of his meeting with 'Bri-gung-pa Nam-mkha' rGyal-mtshan and a vision of the bKa'-brgyud lineage, and a similar visit with Ngor-chen Kun-dga' bZang-po (1382-1456). Thang-stong also met again with his teacher bKa'-lnga-pa dPal-'byor Shes-rab, and this time the situation was reversed as Thang-stong taught the master and his followers an Avalokiteśvara sādhana. In the next year Thang-stong met Rong-ston Shes-bya Kun-rig (b. 1367) at Nalentra, and each proclaimed the other to be omniscient. At Rva-sgreng, Thang-stong transmitted the bKa'-gdams gLegs-bam teachings, and afterwards had a vision of Atīśa, 'Brom-ston and Bu-ston, thus establishing his link with the bKa'-gdams school. Thang-stong also lectured at sTag-lung Monastery on the history of the bKa'-brgyud sect and the teachings of Mahāmudrā.

According to the account in B-1, Thang-stong's disciple Nyi-zla bZang-po[64] was born in either 1436 or 1437.[65] In 1437 it seems that Tibet underwent a major famine.[66] Thang-stong attempted to alleviate the situation by collecting offerings and performing auspicious ceremonies. He was also engaged in more construction work, on his main monastery at Ri-bo-che, and on a bridge at bKra-shis-rtse. In 1438 he completed a bridge at Chu-bo-ri, and another at sTod-lungs.

Thang-stong's prolific activity should not give us the impression that his work was free of obstacles. B-1 reports in detail on his problems, ranging from funding and engineering difficulties, to

conservative sceptics, angry earth gods, and jealous, competitive sects. On one occasion Thang-stong was forced to employ monks and translators, and after a long period of heavy labor they began to complain that their Lama never taught doctrine but just unceasingly built bridges and temples. Threatened with major desertion, Thang-stong exhorted them to keep the theoretical side of Buddhism in proper perspective, saying, in part:

> If you don't know how to practise Dharma
> Whatever you do will be a cause for bondage.
> You can travel the whole kingdom, but you're just a beggar.
> You can be clever with words, but you're just a songster.
> You can stay on the mountain, but you're just a wild animal.
> You can stay in a cave, but you're still an outsider.
>
> Knowing your primordial nature,
> Becoming proficient at cause and effect,
> And understanding what is to be accepted or rejected are important.
> Now that you have achieved freedom,
> If you don't aspire to perform meritorious actions,
> You'll be born in the lower realms,
> And though you may be sorry there's nothing you can do....
>
> Those who want to be my followers
> Should put all emphasis on this life's concerns behind them.
> Just use whatever food and clothing appear.
> Commit your body and mind to meritorious action
> For the benefit of all sentient beings.
>
> Basically, repeat the six syllables,
> Always meditate on impermanence and death,
> Contemplate well on the visiousness of Saṁsāra,
> And fix your mind on the Three Precious Jewels.
> If you can do this, you'll really have accomplished something.[67]

Thus work continued. Thang-stong had by this time acquired wealthy patrons, and throgh their means constructed several jewelled statues. Some seem to have survived until recent times, as they were reported to be in central Tibet in the early part of this century.[68]

The construction projects in central Tibet continued for several years. Later he travelled to eastern Tibet. He discovered the Zhing

skyong gi sgrub thabs and *gSal ba'i sgron me* Treasure texts at Tsa-ri.[69] He built bridges in several locations in Khams, which are listed in B-1.[70] A temple that he erected in this area later became sDe-dge Monastery.[71]

In China, Thang-stong went to Mt. Wu-tai-shan, the court of the emperor, and the Nya'i-tu Palace, and is said to have given teachings and initiations.

Returning to central Tibet, he was increasingly concerned with construction and institutional establishment. More bridges were erected, at rDza-chu, 'Bri-chu, and Nyag-chu. At his monastery at Chu-bo-ri he established administrative structures and installed bKa'-bcu-pa rGyal-mtshan bZang-po as his regent.[72] He had two copies of the *bKa'-'gyur* written out at bKra-shis-rtse. At the age of eighty-six, in the "female fire rabbit year" of 1447, he began work on another bridge at Yongs-ru in upper gTsang.

An act of Thang-stong which is counted by the biographies as one of his main deeds is his conversion of the heretical Indian king of Kamata.[73] B-1 reports that he sent an "emanation of himself" from the bSam-'grub Temple in Phag-ri to Kamata. Through magical feats and persuasion the emanation is supposed to have made the king desist from his practice of blood offerings and sacrifice. Then the emanation translated some of the Buddhist texts into the Kamata language. The king later lapsed back into his old ways, and this time it is said that Thang-stong sent human representatives, led by his "heart-son" dKon-mchog dPal-bzang, and including bDe-ba bZang-po from lHo Pa-gro.[74] It might be added here that B-1 also credits Thang-stong with performing meditative rites to conquer the growing army of one Tīrthika Karma

Goraṇa who was planning to raze Bodhgaya.[75]

During the latter part of his life Thang-stong became involved in projects of a symbolic or magical nature which in Buddhism were considered to have a beneficial effect on the community at large. A salient example is his extensive building of stūpas. In addition to the large stūpa at his principal seat at Ri-bo-che,[76] Thang-stong is said to have constructed special stūpa-like structures on Tibet's borders which had the effect of averting the invading Hor tribes. The menace of these tribes had evidently become severe in Mang-yul and Gu-ge. The sites chosen for the auspicious structures were called 'key spots' (sa'i me-brtsa'), a term which refers to geomantical calculation.[77] B-1 adds that the students who were to build these special stūpas had to have abandoned "all attachment to their lives."[78] This state of mind was thought to indicate that the proper causes and conditions for success had come together.[79] We also have a description of Thang-stong's construction of a stūpa from lime which was believed to avert plagues.[80] The mining of lime necessitated elaborate rituals to appease the local spirits. On another occasion Thang-stong is said to have prevented a famine in Mi-nyag by reciting a litany with efficacious powers.[81]

Towards the end of B-1 we read of Thang-stong's students. While he was involved in the construction of the lime stūpa a young woman came to study with him.[82] She was rJe-btsun-ma Chos-kyi sGron-ma, considered to be the third in a line of incarnations of the Ḍākinī Vajravārāhī.[83] It appears that she may have become Thang-stong's wife, although B-1 makes no mention of this.[84] Later in B-1 we learn that she died and her disciple bDe-legs Chos-'dren consulted Thang-stong in

order to locate the next incarnation.[85] rJe-btsun Kun-dga' bZang-mo, born in the "earth female rabbit year" (1459) was tested and determined to be the reincarnation of rJe-tsun Chos-sgron. She later studied with Thang-stong as well.

In 1456, while the stūpa at Ri-bo-che was being completed, bKa'-bcu-pa Blo-gros rGyal-mtshan became Thang-stong's disciple. He became the scribe for Thang-stong's Shangs-pa writings and the main inheritor of that tradition.[86] During the same period, Nyi-ma bZang-po was already being referred to as bsTan-'dzin Rinpoche, the title for Thang-stong's principal successors.[87]

Near the end of Thang-stong's life, the artist lDer-sku mKhan-po was commissioned by six wealthy students to make a realistic image of him. Six were made, and were claimed to have magical powers. It was declared that an image of Thang-stong rGyal-po could grant the faithful worshipper wealth or children.[88]

Soon after the images were completed, Thang-stong stated that the servants of Yama, Lord of Death, were approaching. He entrusted his monasteries and structures to various disciples. Nyi-ma bZang-po, the bsTan-'dzin Rinpoche, was appointed inheritor of the bridges. Byams-pa sNyan-grags, who is described as Thang-stong's relative and spiritual son, was placed in charge of the religious objects. His physical son (sku'i sras) Don-grub bZang-po was designated to be the progenitor of the family line (gdung-brgyud),[89] and the son sKyab-pa bZang-po to continue Thang-stong's activities at the center in Tsa-gong,[90] in the east, and in Mon.

B-1 states in summary that Thang-stong had fifty-eight major human disciples, and sixteen disciples who were Ḍākinīs. B-3 supports

these figures, adding that he had fifty-eight "karmically connected" students, six "precious boys" (mchog-gi pu), eight close precious sons (nye-ba'i sras mchog), five wisdom Ḍākinīs, sixteen secret mKha'-'gro-mas (the Tibetan word for Ḍākinī is used here), eighteen Ḍākinīs who were committed to fidelity (dam-tshig ḍākinī), thirty-seven male and female wisdom holders (rig-'dzin), five hundred non-returners, and eighty thousand followers who could help others.[91]

According to B-1, Thang-stong died in 1485. Explaining to his disciples that he was demonstrating the process of death, his body began to dissolve into light. When his "heart-son"[92] beseeched him to remain, Thang-stong reappeared in the sky, sang a song describing the death experience, requested that his demise be kept secret for thirty years lest the Hor tribes become troublesome, and named bsTan-'dzin Nyi-ma bZang-po and Shes-rab dPal-ldan as his principal successors.

As an afterword at the conclusion of B-1 we are told that Shes-rab dPal-ldan had met Thang-stong when the former was twenty-six and had been his disciple for sixteen years. After Thang-stong's death he remained as a regent for thirty-two years, and did much to avert the Hor tribes.[93]

The final statement in B-1 is that in the "female fire ox year" (1517), the precious bodily remains (sku-gdung rin-po-che) were placed in a silver stūpa. When it was consecrated, the Dharma king Nam-mkha' Legs-pa, predicted as an incarnation of King Srong-btsan sGam-po, took possession of it.[94]

Notes

1. B-1, p. 3: "zhi ba thugs rje chen po dang/ khro bo dpal chen rta mgrin gnyis/ gnyis med gcig tu sprul pa/" See also B-3, p. 726; and B-4, p. 539.

2. Padmasaṃbhava is traditionally credited with introducing tantric Buddhism into Tibet from India in the 8th century A.D. B-1, p. 4, states: "Padma 'byung gnas nyid...slar yang...byon pa...thang stong rgyal po zhes/" B-4, p. 539, identifies Thang-stong as a combination of Avalokiteśvara and Padmasaṃbhava: "sPyan ras gzigs dang dpal rta mgrin zung du 'jug pa'i rnam phrul gu ru padma mngal skyes kyi tshul du byon pa grub pa'i dbang phyug thang stong rgyal po/"

3. bDud-'joms 'Jigs-bral Ye-shes rDo-rje, sNga 'gyur byung tshul, chapter 6, accords many of the Treasure discoverers a prophecy from Padmasaṃbhava, following the tradition of the Padma bka' thang, chapter 92; see Gustave C. Toussaint, Le dict de Padma, p. 376. These sources do not record a prophecy concerning Thang-stong. However, B-1, p. 99, reports that Thang-stong "met" Padmasaṃbhava and was declared to be his reincarnation. See also note 4 below.

4. B-1, p. 3: "Padma gling pa'i gter yig las/ Padma'i sprul ba thang stong ba zhes 'byung/ De dus bod 'bangs sems can cung zad bde/" Padma Gling-pa probably refers to the famed Treasure discoverer O-rgyan Padma Gling-pa (b. 1450). (See Aris, Bhutan, p. 160 seq.) A statement in GT-III-1, p. 360 is similar to that recorded in B-1, but here it is not identified as a Treasure of Padma Gling-pa: "Thang stong zhes bya ba 'byung/ De dus bod khams cung zad bde/"

5. His personal name was Shes-rab rGyal-mtshan. See George Roerich, Blue Annals, p. 755; and, Thu'u-bkwan Blo-bzang Chos-kyi Nyi-ma, Grub mtha' thams cad shel gyi me long, chapter on the Jo-nang-pas. Dol-po-pa's work on the 'other-emptiness'(gzhan-stong) system is the Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho.

6. B-3, p. 726; Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas, Shes bya kun khyab mdzod, vol. 1, pp. 531-532.

7. The Tibetan biographies and other literature directly concerned with the tradition of Thang-stong claim either a 128 year life span or a 125 year life span. B-1, p. 342, states that he lived 128 years, but the dates it supplies elsewhere add up to 124 years: B-1, p. 19, gives the "iron ox year" (= 1361) for the birth, and on p. 342 gives the "female earth snake year of the eighth cycle" (of the sexegenary calendar) (= 1485) as the death date. B-3, p. 728, states that he lived for 128 years, whereas Kong-sprul, B-4, p. 540, says that he lived for 125 years. bsTan-'dzin Ye-shes lHun-grub, CM-1-c, p. 613, follows B-1 in claiming the 128 year life span but supplies the dates of 1361-1485, also adding, p. 608, that the birth year of the "iron ox" was in the "sixth cycle,"

thus strengthening the 1361 position.

The 128/125 inconsistency has been pointed out by scholars such as Michael Aris, Bhutan, p. 185. However, it appears that the 128 years are accounted for by peculiarities in the lunar calendar, such that the "extra days and months" of the 125 calendrical years result in an actual count of 128 years. This alluded to in B-1, p. 342: "drug cu skor gnyis dang lo rkyang lnga'i ngo thog gshol rtsis pas dgung lo brgya dang nyer brgyad bzhes pa/" This method of calculation would have to be thoroughly elucidated in order to support the 128 year claim.

As for the fact that the dates 1361-1485 only add up to 124 years, it can be explained by the Tibetan custom to count age from the date of conception. All age claims from Tibetan sources should automatically be diminished by one year in order to conform to Western calculations. Thus it would appear that the Tibetan tradition directly concerned with Thang-stong is claiming a 124 year life span according to the Western solar calendar.

The Tibetan sources not directly connected to the tradition of Thang-stong display a wide diversity. Cyrus Stearns, personal letter, 1979, reports that a biography of Ngor-chen Kun-dga' bZang-po states that Thang-stong lived 137 years. The historians Sum-pa mKhan-po, dPag bsam ljon bzang, p. 41, and sDe-srid Sang-rgyas rGya-mtsho, Vaiḍūrya dkar po, p. 20b, state that Thang-stong was born in the "wood ox" year of 1385. bDud-'joms, sNga 'gyur 'byung tshul, p. 577, also gives the birth date of 1385, and adhering to the 125 (124) year tradition, supplies a death date of 1509. bDud-'joms is followed by Dhong-thog Rinpoche, Important Events in Tibetan History, p. 61.

Guiseppi Tucci, Tibetan Painted Scrolls, p. 163, supplies the dates 1385-1464, and is followed by R. A. Stein, Recherches sur l'epopee et le barde au Tibet, pp. 32; 238; and Alfonsa Ferrari, mK'yen-brtse's Guide to the Holy Places of Tibet, p. 90, note 4. The birth date of 1385 originates with the dGe-lugs-pa historians Sum-pa mKhan-po and sDe-srid Sangs-rgyas rGya-mtsho, as cited above. As for the death date of 1464, John Ardussi, "Some notes on the Dates of Thang-stong rGyal-po and his connection to the Rituals of Long Life," p. 3, suggests that it originates in a misreading of the date of the composition of B-1 on the part of Tucci. The author of B-1, p. 345, states that he wrote the biography in the 125th year after Thang-stong's death, i.e. in the 10th month of the "female earth bird year" (sa-mo bya'i lo) which would be 1609. Ardussi postulates that Tucci misread the latter as sa-mo byi lo (the "female earth rat year") which would be 1588 and would indicate that Thang-stong died in 1464. Gene Smith, introduction to Shangs pa gser 'phreng, p. 4, seems to have dependend on Tucci's reading. We do not currently have access to Tucci's manuscript of B-1 and therefore cannot conclusively establish an error in his reading. However, 1464 as death date is not stipulated by any of the Tibetan sources and contradicts all other evidence.

It remains to determine whether Thang-stong's birth was in 1361 or 1385. Evidence can be gathered from the reports of Thang-stong's meetings with known historical figures as confirmed in their own biographies. An important instance is Thang-stong's meeting with Re-mda'-pa whose established dates are 1349-1412. Based on the account in B-1, p. 72 seq., we calculate that he must have been 48 when he met Re-mda'-pa, making 1385 an impossible birth date. Cyrus Stearns, The Life and Teachings of Thang-stong rGyal-po, 'King of

the Empty Plain', has presented a number of instances of such date-able meetings in support of the dates 1361-1485.

8. According to Dhong-thog, Important Events, p. 61, the village is a suburb of Rin-chen-sdings.

9. There is also an oral tradition that Thang-stong spent sixty years, or one hundred years, in gestation, during which time his mother could hear him chanting oṁ maṇi padme hūṁ.

10. A major teacher of Thang-stong, known in all the biographies save B-3. B-4, p. 539, states he instructed Thang-stong in the Byang-gter teachings. B-2, pp. 44-45, says only that he "granted profound precepts." According to B-1, Kun-spangs-pa was at rDo-rje gDan at Thang-stong's birth, later was at Ri-bo bKra-bzang where Thang-stong studied a basically rNying-ma curriculum with him, including the Spoken Transmission (bka') and the Discovered Treasures (gter). Kun-spangs-pa appears in the lineage for the gSol 'debs le'u bdun ma (see dKar-chag, p. 88); and in a transmission for the Maṇi bKa'-'bum (as cited by Ngag-dbang Blo-bzang rGya-mtsho, gSan-yig, vol. 2, p. 771) in which the next in line is rGyud-'dzin bSod-nams mChog-bzang, and the next is Thang-stong. See also Rig-'dzin Kun-bzang Nges-don Klong-yangs, Bod du byung ba'i gsang sngags, p. 156.

11. Byang Ngam-ring was the capitol of the Phag-mo 'Gru-pas. The Chos-sde was founded in 1225. See Ferrari, Mk'yen-brtse's Guide, p. 135, and Turrell Wylie, The Geography of Tibet According to the 'Dzam-gling-rgyas-bshad, p. 153.

12. Some of this information from CM-1-c, p. 608-9, where we find a list of Thang-stong's teachers, some of whom are not mentioned in the biographies: "Chos-rje bKa'-lnga-pa dang/ mChog-bzang Legs-pa'i Blo-gros/ Byang-sems Nyi-ma Seng-ge/ Chos-rje bSam-'grub rGyal-mtshan/ Theg-chen Chos-kyi rGyal-po/ mChed-zla Bla-ma Grags-bzang-pa/ Re-mda'-pa gZhon-nu Blo-Gros/ lHa-gdong-pa bSod-nams mChog/ Byang-sems sPyin-pa bZang-po/ Sa-skya-pa Kun-dga'i-mtshan/ Jo-nang-pa Chos-dpal-mgon/ sGrub-pa-po bZang-po dPal/ Grub-chen rGyal-dbang-pa/ Grub-chen bZang-po sKyong/ Ngor-chen Kun-dga' bZang-po/ Kun-mkhyen sBud-kra-ba/ Gyem-pa bKa'-bzhi-pa Nam-mkha' 'Od-zer/ .... Paṇḍita Mahābodhi dang/ Siddhiratna sogs..." CM-1-c's information may be based on an unidentified eulogistic biography. See p. 149 below.

13. B-1, pp. 33-34.

14. B-1, p. 34: "De'i skabs su grub thob chen po la nang du yon tan khyad par can 'khrungs pas chos brgyud mgo snyoms brtul shugs glang chen chang gis myos pa lta bu...."

15. B-1, p. 35: "'Bum mo che bshengs pa'i rdo bsogs pa'i 'u lag stobs can gzigs bas rjes su yi rang yang yang mdzad." This statement is the basis of Tucci's claim that Thang-stong took part in the construction of the 'Bum-mo-che stūpa; See Tucci, Tibetan Painted Scrolls, pp. 179-185.

16. B-1, p. 43: "Nga ni gtad med kyi smyon pa ste/"

17. B-1, p. 45: "gSang sngags kyi dbang bskur/ rab gnas sbyin sreg tshogs 'khor gang byed kyang/ dge slong gi rten mchog...."

18. bKa'-lnga-pa dPal-'byor Shes-rab is known from the literature directly concerning Thang-stong as the teacher who ordained the Siddha, and as the author of the Ma nam mkha' ma refuge. See KKM-2-b, p. 23; and B-2, p. 1. bKa'-lnga-pa also appears in a list of students, along with Thang-stong, of the Shang-pa teacher Mus-chen Nam-mkha'i rNal-'byor, as recounted by 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po, Bla ma rnam bzhi'i rnam thar bsdud ba le tshen mzhi, pp. 665-666. Cyrus Stearns, personal communication, 1979, states that bKa'-lnga-pa was a teacher of the Sa-skya luminary dKon-mchog rGyal-mtshan, that he founded rDzong Chos-sde in 1427, and that he was an abbot of Byang Ngams-ring Chos-sde. That he was a teacher of the Byang king rNam-rgyal Grags-bzang is recorded by sDe-srid Sang-rgyas rGya-mtsho, Āyurveda in Tibet, p. 311.

19. An Indian Siddha of the 11th century. Known primarily as the teacher of Mar-pa. Several of his works survive in the bsTan-'gyur. Note that Thang-stong "meets" Kukuripa, p. 53 , below.

20. Note that the standard Buddhist refuge--in the Buddha, Dharma, and Assembly of Followers--is expressed in one sentence. The other three statements of refuge refer to the guru, who in Tibetan Buddhism is considered to be on an equal footing with the Buddha; the patron deities of tantric Buddhism; and the basic state of mind, which reflects the terminology of rDzogs-chen philosophy. The Ma nam mkha' ma is included in most of the Thang-stong literature listed below in Part Two.

21. See discussion of these systems, pp. 80; 103; and 186 below.

22. There is some controversy on the location of Ri-bo bKra-bzang. See Ferrari, mKhyen-brtse's Guide, pp. 131-132.

23. Probably a reference to the 'Chi med dpal ster system.

24. See discussion of these systems, p. 84 below.

25. B-1, p. 51: "...theg pa chen po'i nang nas kyang/ gsang sngags bla med kyi nyams len la zhugs...."

26. B-1, p. 51: "rDzu 'phrul gyis bal yul 'phags pa shing kun du skad cig la phebs/" See p. 94 below, n. 39.

27. Mahābodhi is known to have taught the Kṛyāsamuccaya (Tohoku 3305) at Ye-rang, Nepal. See Roerich, Blue Annals, pp. 1045-1046.

28. See Roerich, Blue Annals, p. 1030 seq. From the statement that Mitrayogin was a student of Lalitavajra we may assume that Dharmaratna lived in the 11th century.

29. An Indian Siddha of the 11th century. Known also as Śabarapada. Considered to be a master of the Mahāmudrā. See Roerich, Blue Annals, p. 841 seq.

30. According to B-1 he was 320 years old when Thang-stong met him. Judging by his name, he was Tibetan.

31. B-1, p. 63: "bu rnal 'byor ba zhes 'bod pa'i sgra/" See p. 187 below.

32. See p. 191 seq. below.

33. B-1, p. 66: "Yum 'das nas brtson 'grus smyon pa la chos 'jig rten gyi brda' chad med zer/"

34. This incident cited as one of the origins of the Grub thob thugs tig.. See p. 234 below.

35. See p. 108 below.

36. Known primarily as the teacher of Tsong-kha-pa. See Tshe-mchog-gling Ye-shes rGyal-mtshan, Byang chub lam kyi rim pa'i bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam par thar pa rgyal bstan mdzes pa'i rgyan mchog phul byung nor bu'i phreng ba, Vol. 2, p. 929-954 for Re-mda'-pa's biography. His meeting with Thang-stong is recorded on p. 942, although there is some discrepancy as to the site of the meeting place, this source claiming Me-tog mDangs-can, near sKyid-grong.

37. In Tsang. See Wylie, Geography of Tibet, p. 185.

38. The Ḍākinīs, or female 'sky-going' deities, are included in the Buddhist pantheon on a level similar to that of the celestial Buddhas (e.g. Vajravārāhī), but also appear as worldly (laukika) demonesses. In a general sense, they are sometimes portrayed in five iconographical groups in accordance with the standard five-directioned maṇḍala. In this context the central Ḍākinī is green, which correspondes to the action ('phrin-las) class connected to Amoghasiddhi Buddha.

38a. Chos-brgyad; gain, loss, blame, praise, shame, fame, sorrow, and joy.

39. B-1, pp. 74-75. Also see Sh-1.

40. Cited as a major Treasury discovery of Thang-stong. See appendix below.

41. B-1, pp. 84-85. Much is said about this center later on in B-1, as Thang-stong seems to have spent his last years there. Identified as the main seat of the lCags-zam sect in Sh-4, pp. 549; 629. A tradition reported by Sarat Chandra Das, Journey to Lhasa and Central Tibet, p. 143, is that 108 hermitages were built on this location by Thang-stong. The monastery seen in the 19th century, as reported in

Ferrari, mK'yen-brtse's Guide, p. 65. Lama Paltul Jampal Lodoe, A Record of Nyingma Monasteries in Tibet, p. 12, states that one incarnated lama and 30 monks lived there in the 20th century. For an account of the fate of this area in recent times, see article "Life in Chung Riwoche" (Tibetan Review, August 1979).

42. See p. 219 seq. below.

43. See p. 210 seq. below.

44. This cemetery also mentioned in B-2, p. 45, and may have been one of Thang-stong's visions concerning the gSang spyod snyan brgyud. See p. 162 below.

45. See p. 203 seq. below.

46. The location of Uḍḍiyana long a puzzle but generally accepted to be in the Swat Valley. However, some scholars have attempted to place it in Southern India. See Lokesh Chandra, "Oḍḍiyana--A New Interpretation." The account in B-1 supports the thesis that this land was in the south. B-1, p. 95-97 describes "U-rgyan" as being an island to the northwest of Siṅgala, and surrounded by mountains made of precious jewels. Uḍḍiyana believed by Tibetans to be accessible only to advanced Buddhist practitioners.

47. See discussion of these systems, p. 84 below.

48. B-1, p. 99: "Grub thob chen bo rang gi chos skal gyi gter lnga/" Although several of Thang-stong's Discovered Treasures are labelled as his 'Dharma-lot' in B-1, neither B-1 nor B-4 lists the five texts. See Appendix below.

49. sgrub-brgyud. Refers to the tradition of meditative retreat.

50. In this context, 'good birth' refers to the luxury of adequate travelling facilities and freedom from bandits. Dangerous roads were a major problem in Thang-stong's period.

51. sa'i me-btsa', a key geomantical spot, often used to describe Thang-stong's construction sites. The term seems to have a dual meaning: as defined in the geomantical theories current in Tibet; and in the general sense that a religious structure such as a stūpa or temple is believed to dissuade criminals from misdeeds in its vicinity, thus indicating the influence that such a structure would exert on its area of location. An early description of Tibetan geomantical concepts in R. A. Stein, ed., Une chronique ancienne de bSam-yas: sBa-bśad, p. 78 seq. The ogress who lays prone over Tibet is controlled by placing stūpas in 'key spots' on her body. A thorough analysis of related legends presented by Aris, Bhutan, p. 8 seq.

52. From B-1, p. 109.

53. See p. 150 and Appendix below.

54. B-1, p. 135. The story is told that the people of Kong-po and Klo had begged Padmasambhava to open the region, presenting him with the maps and keys to the area, but that no one before Thang-stong rGyal-po had actually accomplished the task. It is also stated, B-1, p. 143, that Karma-pa Rang-'byung rDo-rje (1284-1399) had previously tried to train the barbarians of Klo but had failed.

55. See p. 92 below, n. 9.

56. See B-1, p. 146 seq.

57. B-1, p. 151. King Srong-btsan sGam-po was of the seventh century.

58. See note 7 above. All ages cited subsequently correspond to the Western solar calendar.

59. B-1, p. 155.

60. We presently lack the evidence to document such a figure. Mr. Hugh Richardson has supplied this writer with his photographs of bridges in Tibet ascribed to Thang-stong. Also, some of Thang-stong's bridges are still standing in Bhutan. See p. 15 above, n. 15. However, it appears that iron bridges in Tibet are automatcally ascribed to Thang-stong. Thus all claims would have to be investigated fully. One criteria for such a study proposed by sDe-gzhung Rinpoche (personal communication, 1979) would be the presence of an embossed vajra on each link, said to be a mark of an original piece forged by Thang-stong.

61. See Ferrari, mK'yen-brtse's Guide, p. 71 and plate 49. Wylie, Geography of Tibet, p. 74, confuses this center with dPal-chen Ri-bo. Chu-bo-ri said by Lama Paltul Jampal Lodoe, Record of Nyingma Monasteries, p. 14, to contain one incarnated lama and 40 monks in the 20th century.

62. See Appendix.

63. See p. 164 below.

64. Nyi-zla bZang-po is known from the lineages of Thang-stong's systems, where he is usually listed after Kun-dga' Grol-mchog. Although the birth of a Nyi-zla bZang-po is mentioned in B-1, p. 192, all other references to this person in B-1 are as Nyi-ma bZang-po. Thus there is question as to whether this figure is the same as the Nyi-zla bZang-po who is listed in the lineages. bsTan-dzin Ngag-dbang Nyi-zla bZang-po is mentioned in a group of students in which Kun-dga' Grol-mchog (1507-1566) is also present, which makes the former's birth in 1437 unlikely (see Ngag-dbang Kun-dga' bSod-nams, 'Dzam gling byang phyogs kyi thub pa'i rgyal tshab chen po dpal ldan sa skya pa'i gdung rabs rin po che ji ltar byon pa'i tshul gyi rnam par thar pa ngo tshar rin po che'i bang mdzod dgos 'dod kun 'byung, p. 548).

65. The latter year mentioned soon after this event. See B-1, p. 192.

66. B-1, p. 194.

67. B-1, pp. 206-207.

68. See Ferrari, mKhyen-brtse's Guide, pp. 40; 41; 67; 71; 90; 91.

69. Identified as Thang-stong's Dharma-lot. See Appendix.

70. See B-1, p. 224 seq.

71. B-1, p. 225. This information is in a footnote set in smaller type, added by one bsTan-'dzin rGyal-mtshan when B-1 was being revised. The note states that while Thang-stong was in Eastern Tibet, and was 106 years old, he set up a temple in the Zal-mo-sgangs area. This temple was to be a subsidiary of sDe-dge lHun-grub, which was completed in 1627. (It should be noted that bsTan-'dzin rGyal-mtshan does not seem to have been familiar with the chronology of B-1: Thang-stong could not have been 106 when he built the temple, since he is said to have been eighty-seven after his return from China. [B-1, p. 259]). Evidently the temple was not known to be the beginning of the important monastery of sDe-dge by the author of B-1, and thus the information was added later. The initial establishment of sDe-dge is also attributed to Thang-stong in an 18th century history of sDe-dge Monastery: Zhu-chen Tshul-khrims Rin-chen, sDe dge'i bstan 'gyur gyi dkar chag, pp. 327-328, reports that a powerful and respected lord named sDe-dge Bo-thar became a disciple of Thang-stong. Then Thang-stong subdued a nāga king who lived in a lake on a shady hill, and coerced him to promise to protect the area. Thang-stong filled up the lake and built a temple on the site. The temple was inaugurated with a ritual for the four-headed Mahākāla. The place became known as Spontaneously Arisen (lhun-grub) because many spiritual and mundane circumstances had spontaneously arisen together in order for the temple to be built. Thus it was called sDe-dge lHun-grub.

72. No other reference to this disciple known at present.

73. Kamata was a Hindu kingdom destroyed by Husayn Shah in 1501-1503. See Aris, Bhutan, p. 105.

74. These two persons said to be the authors of B-5. See p. 11 above.

75. B-1, p. 324.

76. B-1, p. 272 seq. describes the difficulties in raising the structure, in particular an uprising of the conscripted laborers and a battle between the Ri-bo-che workers and 1000 monks from the Ngam-ring Cho-sde. The stūpa was finally erected "with the help of gods and ghosts." It is said to be in the bkra-shis sgo-mangs style.

77. See note 51 above.

78. For example, see B-1, p. 262 seq.: Thang-stong was searching for a builder of the stūpa, saying "Sems can gyi don du tshe blos thongs pa e yod...."

79. See B-1, p. 261 seq.

80. B-1, p. 281 seq.

81. See S-1-c.

82. B-1, p. 283.

83. She may be an early member of the bSam-gding rDo-rje Phag-mo line, the history of which is not completely known. Kaḥ-thog Tshe-dbang Nor-bu, Bod rje lha btsad po'i gdung rabs mnga' ris smad mang yul gung thang du ji ltar byung ba'i tshul deb gter dwangs shel 'phrul gyi me long, p. 14a, states "lCam sring A grol chos kyi sgron me shes rdo rje phag mo'i sprul par grags shing dus der bo dong 'jigs bral gyi rjes su bzung nas yang dag pa'i ye shes brnyes pa rnal 'byor gyi dbang phyug mar gyur pa zhig ste de'i skye rgyud da lta ya 'brog rje btsun mar grags pa de'o." The identification of Chos-sgron as being of the Gung-thang royalty is strengthened by the statement in B-1 that a member of the 'od-gsal lha'i brgyud-pa clan met her in Kong-po. This clan name is a euphemism for the Gung-thang line (personal communication from Cyrus Stearns, 1979).

84. The issue of Thang-stong's wive(s) is unsettled. None of the biographies state that he was ever married. However, Kaḥ-thog Si-tu Chos-kyi rGya-mtsho, Gangs ljongs dbus gtsang gnas bskor lam yig, p. 371, states that he saw an image of a white Cakrasaṁvara that had belonged to Thang-stong rGyal-po's wife (gsang-yum) Chos-kyi sGron-ma, at the 'Brog Gangs-lting Monastery of the Bo-dong sect. See note 83 above for description of Chos-kyi sGron-ma's connection to Bo-dong 'Jigs-bral. See also p. 11; and p. 17, n. 37 above, where it is noted that A-ni Chos-sgron was a primary source for B-5. A-ni ('nun') is often used as a euphemism for 'wife' in tantric Buddhism. sDe-zhung Rinpoche, in a personal communication, 1979, expressed the opinion that B-1 is an "external biography" of Thang-stong and therefore would not discuss the intimate subject of wives. The same is said of the biography of Milarepa which does not mention the fact, known to the oral tradition, that he had five wives. We should also note that B-1 mentions several of Thang-stong's sons. See note 89 below.

85. B-1, p. 310 seq.

86. See p. 191 seq. below.

87. B-1, p. 298. See p. 171 seq. below.

88. An illustration of the currency of this belief is the widespread Tibetan use of an image of Thang-stong as an amulet on the occasion of building or moving into a new home.

89. This is the first mention of Thang-stong's physical sons. sDe-gzhung Rinpoche, personal communication, 1979, stated that the bsTan-'dzin Rinpoche line of Thang-stong's successors is also a familial lineage (gdung-brgyud), but we have not found evidence to support this opinion.

90. The only known mention of this center of Thang-stong's followers.

91. B-3, p. 728.

92. Identified by B-4, p. 541, as Nyi-ma bZang-po, but from the discussion in B-1, p. 331 seq. it appears that he was absent at Thang-stong's death.

93. This statement corroborated by sDe-srid Sang-rgyas rGya-mtsho, Āyurveda in Tibet, p. 327.

94. B-1, p. 344. It is tempting to identify this Nam-mkha' Legs-pa with the author of B-2, but the biography we have of the latter says nothing to indicate that he was a 'Dharma king' or that he was present when Thang-stong's remains were interned. See p. 178 seq. below.

Chapter 3: The Origins, Forms and Affiliations of Tibetan Visionary Buddhism

Implicit in the traditional accounts of the visions and deeds of Thang-stong rGyal-po are a variety of assumptions that exemplify the world view of a particular religious and cultural milieu. In order to understand the full significance of these accounts and the systems of thought that evolved on their basis, we need address the nature of these assumptions and the context in which they developed.

The traditions associated with Thang-stong are part of a major trend in Tibetan Buddhism, which had begun by the 11th century, to introduce new religious systems and meditative techniques on the authority of a visionary experience. This movement should not be considered to be a uniquely Tibetan development, however, as new systems of thought have been introduced periodically into Buddhism throughout its history, either in the form of secular literature (*śāstra*) or as a new revelation of the true word of Buddha in the form of a simulated scripture (*sūtra* or *tantra*). The resulting need to distinguish the authentic word of Buddha from the apocryphal has had to be brought to terms with the equally important need to incorporate new spiritual insights to insure the continued vitality and relevance of the religion. That there have evolved various devices that would establish the legitimacy of the new material is evident in many chapters of Buddhist thought.

The issue of authenticity can be traced to the very beginnings of Buddhism. At the "First Council of Rājagṛha" after the Buddha's death, the disciples attempted to recall the sermons of their teacher in order to establish a canon of his teachings. The statement "Thus have I heard at one time" took on a special significance and came to indicate that what followed was a first hand account of the Buddha's teachings.[1] This phrase was to be repeated even at the beginning of the Buddhist tantras that were formulated many centuries later.

A major development occurred with the introduction of the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras. One of the earliest of these scriptures states that a genuine pupil of the Jina is authorized to give teachings which would in fact stem from the power of the Buddha himself.[1a] That such power (expressed by the Sanskrit words adhiṣṭāna or anubhāva) could inspire, in some mystical way, new sermons or texts which had not been heard during Buddha Śākyamuni's lifetime, became a rallying point for the development of the Mahāyāna canon.

The theme of established tradition in opposition to new developments and interpretations recurred throughout the history of Buddhism. The debates between the Theravādins and Mahāsaṅghikas, and between the Vaibāṣikas and Sauntrāntikas, are typical examples.[2] The hermenuetics to settle a doctrinal issue often rested on relevant citations from an authoritative scripture. This practice was responsible in part for claims of special circumstances of origin to further the credibility of certain scriptures. The legend that Nāgārjuna extracted the Prajñāpāramitā texts from the land of the nāgas is a case in point. Again, the claim that Asaṅga travelled to the Tuṣita heaven and heard the Yogācāra doctrines directly from the future

Buddha Maitreya helped established the texts of those teachings almost onto the level of sūtra.

The Tibetan visionary tradition, which purported to represent further communication with the spiritual source of the already dubious tantric scriptures, may be characterized as another example of the attempt to establish authenticity for innovative material. The continuing appearance of new traditions of this sort even in twentieth century Tibet illustrates the degree to which the canon was considered unclosed in the visionary schools.

The introduction of new canonical material on the basis of vision and revelation seems to have played an important enough role in Tibet to have necessitated the generation of ways to classify Buddhist literature on that very basis. The categories that were devised by the tradition reflect the concerns over the issue of the source of authentic Buddhist teachings which was raised by the visionary movement in Tibet.

Three classes of literature were widely used to identify the type of origin claimed for a given textual tradition. However, few Western scholars have noted these classes; Eva Dargyay's recent study identifies only two of the three.[3] The first class is the Spoken Transmission (bka'-ma), a designation which denotes that a text or teaching has been taught by master to disciple in a long and unbroken succession of human teachers stemming back to the original canonical source. In theory the Spoken Transmission refers to the entire Tibetan canon, including the sūtras, śāstras, and the Vinaya. However its most common application in this context is to the Buddhist tantras, for it is the tantric systems which provide the basic

framework for the large majority of the visionary literature. The Spoken Transmission class thus includes the bKa' 'gyur and the bsTan 'gyur, as well as the 100,000 Old Tantras (rNying ma'i brgyud 'bum) which is not considered canonical by some Tibetan schools.[4]

The second class, the Discovered Treasures (gter-ma), refers to material which was "discovered" in a variety of manners. Discovered Treasures from the Earth (sa-gter) include texts written on yellow rolls of paper (shog-ser), as well as objects such as ritual instruments, gems, and statues, all of which are purported to have been unearthed from the ground. Treasures Discovered in the Mind (dgongs-gter) are texts which are said to have been implanted by a celestial Buddha or a teacher of the past, and to have appeared spontaneously in the consciousness of the visionary.[5] Other subclasses are the Remembered Treasures (rjes-dran gter) which are texts discovered in the visionary's memory of a past life, and the Rediscovered Treasures (yang-gter)[6] which are texts that are said to have been discovered at some point in the past and later rehidden for rediscovery at a more "appropriate time."

All of the texts classified as Discovered Treasures make the claim that they were deliberately hidden in the past, either by Padmasaṁbhava (the semi-legendary tantricist of the 8th century credited with introducing Vajrayāna Buddhism into Tibet), his wife Ye-shes mTsho-rgyal, or other teacher of a previous era. The place of concealment is almost always specified. Usually this location is said to be a geographical spot in Tibet, often a temple or cave. In the case of the Treasures Discovered in the Mind, the hiding place is described with phrases like "the vajra body, the essence of

enlightenment (bodhi)."[7]

A visionary experience is invariably involved in the process of discovery. Some sort of communication with a celestial Buddha or teacher of another era is reported. The discoverer becomes aware of a predetermined course of events which include prophecies and blessings received in a previous lifetime.[8] Other visionary elements alleged are divine instructions or clues that lead the discoverer to the place of concealment. In the case of Thang-stong's discoveries, we also read of the magical appearance of maps and keys which facilitated the unearthing of Treasure texts.

The third class of Buddhist literature in this system is that based on Pure Vision (dag-snang). The Pure Vision is a tantric experience in which the sage meets directly with a celestial Buddha or teacher of another era who reveals special teachings. The meeting may occur in a worldly setting or in one of the Buddhist Pure Lands. In contrast to the Discovered Treasures, the emphasis in the Pure Vision literature is on the visual and experiential aspects connected to the revelation.[10] The Pure Vision functions primarily as an authentication and source of authority for he who experiences it, and for the material that he subsequently introduces. Texts transmitted during the vision are either not mentioned or are secondary in importance. In the Pure Vision literature of Thang-stong, the claim is rarely made that the text represents the revelation itself. Rather, the literature is said to be based on the visionary experience, but to have been written out at a later date.

Another set of terminology parallels these three broad categories of Tibetan Buddhist literature. The term 'successive

transmission' (*ring-brgyud*) refers to teachings that are passed down from master to disciple in a non-visionary and temporal 'unbroken lineage,' and is used as a synonym for the Spoken Transmission. The term ' direct transmission' (*nye-brgyud*) designates any material that has been revealed directly to the sage. The direct transmission category includes both the Discovered Treasures and the Pure Visions.[11] The traditions that are described as direct transmissions are by and large new and innovative versions of an older successive transmission thereby superceded.

By way of summary, the following chart illustrates the Tibetan system of classifying the modes of transmission of the Buddhist teachings:

The Seven Types of Authentic Transmission (*bka'-'babs bdun*)[12]

Successive Transmission (*ring-brgyud*) — 1. Spoken Transmission (*bka'-ma*)

Direct Transmission (*nye-brgyud*) — 2. Pure Vision (*dag-snang*)

Direct Transmission (*nye-brgyud*) — Discovered Treasures (*gter-ma*):

3. Earth Treasure (*sa-gter*)
4. Mental Treasure (*dgongs-gter*)
5. Remembered Treasure (*rjes-dran gter*)
6. Rehidden Treasure (*yang-gter*)

7. Whispered Transmission[13] (*snyan-brgyud*)

The phenomena of the vision was familiar to the Tibetans, as it had long been established as a valid form of religious experience

in several of the milieus that had a profound effect on the Tibetan mentality. The roots of the vision in Buddhism can be observed in the docetic movement that was developing in India by the first century A.D. A gradual apotheosis of celestial Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and deities adopted out of Buddhist and other Indic contexts resulted finally in a complex pantheon that included the icons of the tantras as well as personifications of philosophical concepts (e.g. Prajñāpāramitā as female deity). Contemporaneous to this phenomenon was the appearance of these figures in personal and communicative relationships with the human characters in the Buddhist scriptures. Many examples of spontaneous visions, in which the aspirant receives some sort of inspiration or confirmation of his progress on the Path, may be citen from the sūtras, as when voices from the sky and visions of Buddhas lead Sadāprarudita to his teacher Bodhisattva Dharmodgata in the Aṣṭasāhasrikā prajñāpāramitā;[14] Sudhana is guided by numerous visions in the Gaṇḍavyūha;[15] and the past Buddha Prabhūtaratna appears in a stūpa in the sky as indication of the Tathāgatas' vow to show themselves to those who study the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka.[16]

This development was a reflection of the visionary theism that was becoming widespread in Northern India by the early centuries A.D. The trend towards personal and immediate connection to the enlightenment principle gave rise to the devotional bhakti cults in many Indian religious sects of that period. In the case of Buddhism it may be suggested that there was need for an emotional and living experience of a religion which often tended towards the philosophical and abstract.

An aspect of the visionary trend that became important for

tantric Buddhism was the development of the sādhana practices, in which the aspirant meditatively visualizes that he has actually become the Buddha or deity, and has gained the ultimate realizations of enlightenment. It has been suggested that the systematization of visualization techniques was a direct outgrowth of the descriptions of vision in the sūtras.[17] Such techniques, which may also be traced to relatively early sūtras, involved a conscious attempt to cause and control the occurrence of the visionary experience. However, the distinction between the active performance of the visualiations described by the sādhanas, and the primarily passive role of the practitioner who experiences a spontaneous vision, should be noted. The interdependence of vision and visualization becomes most evident during the tantric period, in which the increasingly numerous attestations of visions coincided with the ascendancy of the sādhana as the prominent form of praxis in Buddhism.[18] The ability to participate in the visualized world was seen as a logical extension of the visualization practice. On the other hand, the visions of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in turn prompted the devising of new visualization systems.

The Tibetans saw the phenomena of vision and revelation as a continuation of the Indian tradition, and presented a rationale for these experiences in terms of Buddhist doctrine. The Pure Vision was readily explained to be in accordance with the themes of the sūtras and tantras. Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas explains the Pure Vision as follows:

> In the special prayers of the Bodhisattvas (it is said,) "May all beings hear the sound of the Dharma continuously, from birds, trees, light rays, and the sky." Since

(Bodhisattvas) have strong prayers of this sort, and since they have no reason to discard the Dharma, they are constantly hearing the sound of the Dharma in the sounds of the elements wild animals, and the like. Moreover, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas show their faces and teach the Dharma. It is said in the bSod nams thams cad sdud pa ting nge 'dzin gyi mdo: "Dri-ma Med-pa'i gZi-brjid, even though the Bhagavan Buddhas may be residing in another world, they show their faces to the Bodhisattvas who are filled with reverence and stores of merit, and who desire the Dharma, (and thus the Bodhisattvas) hear the Dharma." In particular, the sight of the Venerable Ones is totally that of pure vision, as they have no impure vision. As a result of the continual activity of the three sources,[19] it occurs that superior gods, exalted Dharma beings during the three times, and innumerable precepts appear as paths of action to be spread to the fortunate ones, and this is the group of teachings (called) Pure Vision, which is suited to the individual person. Such phenomena have occurred often, as is indicated in the biographies of Indian scholars and Siddhas, Tibetan masters,....[20]

It is interesting to note that the term Pure Vision is related here to its more general connotation of the purified perception of the Bodhisattva.[21] The implication is that it is natural for the practitioner with advanced attainments to meet and study with the enlightened beings of the Pure Lands.

The supernormal powers that are often described as part of the Pure Vision experience are also known to early Buddhism. Human flight was considered to be one of the abilities of the Arhat. Other powers (ṛddhibala) that were said to result from concentration (dhyāna) included the abilities to pass through solid walls, reproduce the body, know past lives, predict the future, and walk on water.[22] Special powers of travel and sight were also part of the descriptions of the buddhist samādhis.[23]

The Discovered Treasure tradition was less easily identifiable in Indian Buddhism, but several writers have endeavored to show such precedents as well. In the gTer rnam brgya rtsa,[24] Kong-sprul quotes

the Nāgarājaparipṛcchāsūtra[25] and the Samādhisūtra to explain the pervasive existence of hidden Dharma teachings which can be perceived by a Bodhisattva with ripened wisdom and developed insight. These hidden teachings are portrayed as being available in inexhaustible quantities concealed in the earth, mountains, etc. The Chos tham cad yang dag par sdud pa'i mdo[26] is said to enumerate ten types of concealed Dharma treasures. Kong-sprul further compares the Discovered Treasure transmission to Nāgārjuna's discovery of the Prajñāpāramitā, and to other Indian traditions. He concludes his discussion with the statement that unorthodox modes of transmission of the Dharma are necessary in the "degenerate age" when there are few qualified teachers.[27]

Kong-sprul's assertions illustrate the way in which the Tibetans linked developments within their religious thought to the Indic traditions, and provides another example of how authentication was sought through citation of authoritative precedents. His line of argument also suggests a further point concerning the significance of the vision: the fact that the vision is defined as the natural result of successful Buddhist practice indicates that its occurrence would confirm the spiritual attainment of the practitioner. The recounting of visits to the Pure Lands and advanced communications with a Buddha or Bodhisattva could not but bolster a claim, on the part of either the master himself or his disciples, of special spiritual powers and access to unique teachings.

The vision was also familiar to the Tibetans through the shamanistic elements of their native religion. Shamanism existed

in Tibet long before Buddhism, and remained a part of the culture throughout its Buddhist period. Although aspects of the indigenous religion, especially Bon, were later altered beyond recognition to mimic the Indian import, the shamanistic world view in turn influenced the direction that Buddhism was to take in Tibet. There were numerous occasions of genuine shamanism in Tibetan Buddhist contexts, and we may note in passing that Thang-stong is credited with a number of feats commonly associated with the shaman, such as averting hailstorms and armies, curing illness through magical means, and controlling evil spirits.

A number of elements are common to visinary Buddhism and shamanism. The role of the shaman conforms to our observation that vision and revelation enhanced the position of the visionary. The shaman functioned as an intermediary between the spiritual and mundane worlds.[28] The ability to communicate with the spirits and travel to their realms was a prerequisite for that status. Various initiatory and ascetic rites were performed to prompt the occurrence of visions and trances. These efforts attest to the importance of the visionary experience in establishing the shaman's credibility as a transmitter of the message of the spirits. In Tibet, it seems that such abilities were expected of all spiritual leaders; this expectation came also to be applied to the Buddhist sage.

Specific elements of the shaman's trance may be recognized in Thang-stong's visions. One example is the bird imagery that appears in the story of the crow-faced man who led Thang-stong in his magical journey to Nepal.[29] The notion of breakthrough and travel to a transcendent realm was an expression of the shaman's desire to surpass

human limitation, and was part of his role as intermediary with the spirits.[30] Thang-stong's sojourn in Uḍḍiyāna or magical arrival at Svayaṁbhū, lands of mythic importance where transcendent teachings and magical feats occur, may thus be seen as shaman's journeys of sorts. The ability to fly, mentioned above as one of the powers of the Arhat, was also commonly attributed to the Tibetan shaman. A Bon-po myth tells of a boy shaman who flew around the various spirit realms for thirteen years in order to receive instruction.[31] Flight is also recounted in the stories of Thang-stong's visions, as when he flew to India to study with the Siddha Virūpa.

Another issue concerning which shamanism bears relevance to visionary Buddhism is the question of the physical nature of the trance, and how the transic state is induced. As a whole, the vision in Buddhism is portrayed as being the responsibility of the envisioned, and not the visionary. The Buddha shows his form or causes his disciples to see the Pure Land. The notion of how the visionary state occurs receives little attention in the literature. The only statement that is usually made is that the exalted experience of Pure Vision is a result of the good karma and effective practice of the visionary. Another way this concept is expressed is the statement that the recipient of visionary teachings was "in the right place at the right time" (rten-'brel bgrigs-pa, lit. 'fitting together of interdependent causes and conditions').[32] In the Discovered Treasure literature, the revelation is said to have been prophesied in the past and deliberately planted in the consciousness of the recipient by its divine expositor.[33] Thus the Buddhist visionary is portrayed in a passive role, as an agent to carry out superworldly intentions.

Similarly, it was often the case in shamanism that the visionary was "chosen" by the spirits for his calling. Indications such as spontaneous trance of possession would identify the appropriate apprentice. But the deliberate quest for vision is also well known and documented for shamanism, and it is possible that knowledge of these practices may provide some suggestions for the study of visionary Buddhism. In particular, the manipulatory techniques of the shaman such as chanting incantations, engaging in sensory deprivation and ascetic practices, and performing repetitious dances and rites as preliminaries to a transic performance may be relevant here. Recent scientific studies have supported the notion that repetition, monotony, and sensory deprivation can induce states in which hallucinations and other types of "cerebral creativity" occur.[34] It may therefore be suggested that the repetition of mantra and the sensory withdrawal in meditative retreat are factors in the onset of the trance state in Buddhism as well.[35] In the case of Thang-stong it is significant that his visions are often said to have occurred either during, or directly after, an extended meditative retreat. His Avalokiteśvara revelation occurred during a period of reciting the mantra of the Bodhisattva 100,000 times; his eighteen year visionary journey to India was taken directly after a seven year retreat in a mountain hermitage; and his vision of Niguma occurred when he was practicing her systems of yoga. Although we cannot assert that these circumstantial reports are grounds to equate the Buddhist vision with the shamanic trance, sensory withdrawal and repetition of chants undoubtedly are common elements.

The traditional Tibetan accounts make general statements to the

effect that the Buddhist vision can occur either in a dream (rmi-lam), in a meditative apparition (nyams), or in reality (dngos).[36] Thang-stong's visions are usually specified to have involved one of the latter two modes. His journey to Uḍḍiyāna is depicted as a meditative apparition.[37] His travels to Zang-mdog dPal-ri are said to have been made with his "actual body," and to have been "neither like a dream nor a hallucination."[38] In other instances, the term 'magical' (rdzu-'phrul) is used to describe his superworldly feats.[39] In B-1 we read that Thang-stong's teacher Kun-spangs-pa held that the Pure Vision involves a "combination of the dream and the clear-light ('od-gsal) states."[40]

Beyond such random remarks in the traditional literature, study of the physical nature of the trance states is limited. Unlike shamanic possession, the Buddhist vision does not involve public witnesses. We do not know whether the trance in Buddhism is accompanied by such signs as convulsions, enhanced physical powers, or voice change, which are commonly said to occur during the shaman's trance.[41] In the instance of the Treasures Discovered in the Mind, it would be of interest to determine whether the visionary verbalizes the text that appears in his mind so that it could be written down by a disciple on the spot. If this were the case, the Mental Treasure could be compared to the state of possession where the medium mouths the message of the spirit. However, there have not been conclusive studies of the physical or neurological indications of the Buddhist vision.

That there are no witnesses to the Buddhist vision reflects a significant reason why an equation with the shamanic trance is tenuous.

The nature of the Buddhist vision is personal and private, a quality that differs considerably from the public performance of the shaman who communicates with the supernatural forces on behalf of the community at large. A philosophical or doctrinal system of shamanism is virtually unknown. The Buddhist vision, on the other hand, is never worldly in nature, but is primarily soteriologically oriented, and in this sense it owes its greatest debt to Buddhism itself. The Buddhist visionary sees his divine communication as a source for new and different techniques for attaining liberation, and the only sense in which the community is concerned is in the altruistic notion of the Bodhisattva's intention to bring all beings to enlightenment. It is relevant to note here that the Tibetan term for shamanic possession, 'descension of the god' (lha-'babs) shares the verb 'babs with the term 'authentic transmission' (bka'-'babs) of the Buddhist visionary traditions, but in Buddhism it is the authentic pronouncement or teaching (bka') that descends. The Buddhist visionary is basically concerned with the revelation of teachings which lead to enlightenment.

The Tibetan visionaries and their followers generated a prodigious literature describing the revealed philosophical, doctrinal, meditative, and ritual systems. However, certain methodological problems, created both by traditional attitudes towards the attribution of revelation and special modes of translating revelation into a literary format, hamper our attempts to isolate the original visionary material in this literature. The problem is amply illustrated in the traditions attributed to Thang-stong. We have a number of texts labelled "A Teaching of Thang-stong" (Thang-stong chos) or "Directly

Transmitted to Thang-stong" (Thang-stong nye-brgyud). Yet the content of these texts is not the revealed teaching itself but rather a sādhana or initiation ritual composed by later exponents of the tradition who claim to base their writings on Thang-stong's original inspiration. The situation is best exemplified by the gSang spyod snyan brgyud, a collection of texts attributed to Thang-stong's vision of the teachings of Ma-gcig Lab-sgron.[42] Not a single work or chapter in this collection is authored by Thang-stong himself, despite the fact that these texts comprise four volumes of what is entitled The Collected Teachings of Thang-stong rGyal-po.

Analysis of this literature reveals that successive textual layers exist, amongst which we can often recognize a text or texts that seem to be intended to represent the revelatory teaching as such. These texts may be classified as the "visionary core." They are similar to the mūla or kārikā of Indic literature in that they are the referents of the commentaries and subsidiary rituals in the visionary system. The distinctive, and problematical, feature of the visionary core texts is that they are almost always anonymous.

The core text may be labelled in a variety of ways. Usually versified, it is in some cases a separate text, in others an embedded passage. In the Discovered Treasure literature, the visionary core is usually a separate text called the Treasure Book (gter-gzhung). This label does not necessarily appear in the title to the work; it may somtimes be identified as such only in the margin of each page of the manuscript. The Treasure Book consists of a short aphoristic composition which lays out the spiritual authority for the Discovered

Treasure and outlines a particular philosophical and meditative system. The Treasure Book, as well as any initiation rites or visualization instructions which are also considered to have been part of the revelation, is marked by the characteristic gter-shad (꧰) between syllables instead of the usual shad (།) of standard Tibetan orthography. This device serves to visually distinguish the revelatory material from the later layers of commentary and initiation rites which may be appended.

A synonymous type of core text is the Vajrapada (rdo-rje tshig-rkang) which seems for the most part to be associated with the Pure Vision systems. The Vajrapadas are often anonymous.[43] They usually consist of a cryptic statement of philosophy and meditative technique. A typical Vajrapada is to be found in Thang-stong's gSang spyod snyan brgyud tradition.

The Treasure Book and Vajrapada texts are examples of a "visionary document" genre. The distinguishing feature of this genre, similar to that of the sūtras and tantras, is that the texts purport to represent a teaching preached by a Buddha or other member of the celestial pantheon. In lieu of a colophon indicating human authorship, statements of divine source (e.g. the opening phrase "Secret words of the Ḍākinī," or the statement "This is the essential and abbreviated doctrine... from the Lotus King of Orgyan")[44] are to be found at some point in the work. Further it is not uncommon to find the name of the discoverer or visionary in the body of the text[45] along with glowing descriptions of his spiritual attainments and suitability as revealer of the text. These statements serve the dual purpose of granting further authenticity to the discoverer's own semi-exalted status, and of eliminating any

suggestions that the text might be his own composition. Self praise never occurs in the exegetical genres of Tibetan literature, wherein the universal practice of authors is to adopt a pose of extreme humility and embarrassment when signing their name or diffident pseudonym to a work.[46]

There are other types of visionary core texts which, however, cannot be classified as visionary documents. The label 'ancient writing' (yig-rnying)[47] is descriptive of a range of literary genres which function as core texts, including sādhanas and liturgies, but the label itself indicates simply that the text is the first written form of a tradition based on revelation. The phrase 'possessing a blessing' (byin-rlabs can) often describes the ancient writing. In the Tibetan parlance this means that the text confers a blessing on its reader, a concept that implies a special spiritual status, connection to divine source, and the prerequisite of ritual initiation before the text may be read. These qualities are also attributed to the visionary documents, but a content analysis of the ancient writings in the traditions of Thang-stong reveals that such texts do not represent the revelation itself. In the case of the 'Gro don mkha' khyab ma, the ancient writing of Thang-stong's Avalokiteśvara tradition, we find the meditation described therein to be widely divergent from the original visionary instructions, of which we are given a verbatim account in other sources.[48] Another example is the ancient writing of Thang-stong's Chi med dpal ster tradition which is said to have been set down several generations after the revelation was received.[49]

The other, non-core genres of the visionary literature mirror

those of the Tibetan exegetical traditions. However, a curious species is the exegesis of the vision that is written by the visionary himself, usually soon after the experience occurred. Thang-stong's exegeses of his own vision of the Shangs-pa teachings are illustrations of this genre.[50] Unlike the visionary documents, these works contain colophons which identify the author and explain the circumstances in which the texts were composed. By reason of Thang-stong's unique qualification of having intimate knowledge of the visionary material, his interpretations are given a special status and are included under the rubric of direct transmission literature. However, he incorporates material from the Shangs-pa successive transmission in his discussion, and invokes the successive lineages. Further, his style of writing here is that of the standard Tibetan exegetical format of outline with comments, and is widely divergent from the cryptic and poetical assertions of the visionary documents. Therefore, these works cannot be said to maintain the revelatory character that is displayed by the visionary core texts.

A significant feature of the visionary literature which emerges from this discussion, and which defines an inherent dilemma in this study is this: The texts which are meant to represent the revelatory material most closely are concomitantly the most likely to be anonymous. Alternatively, the more the contents of a text diverge from the revelation itself, the more likely that the author will be explicitly identified.

The reluctance to stipulate the author of the visionary documents reflects some of the basic assumptions of Tibetan visionary Buddhism concerning how a revelation is translated into a literary

format. A system to define the transmission (brgyud-pa) of Buddhist teachings in general which was developed within the sects active in the direct transmission movement says much to illustrate the traditional view on this issue.[51] Here, the concept of 'transmission of the realized' (dgongs-pa'i brgyud-pa) defines the primary communication of a Buddhist teaching. Such a teaching is preached by a Dharma Body (dharmakāya) Buddha. It is an expression of the "realization (dgongs-pa) of the primordial awareness of thusness (de-kho-na nyid kyi ye-shes)." The transmission of the realized occurs in a Pure Land. It is important to note that the audience for this transmission is said to be of the highest attainment, such that expositor and recipients may be identified as equivalent.[52] The communication itself is direct and mystical, its completely non-verbal nature described by phrases like "turning the wheel of Dharma through one taste as the great equilibrium of dharma-ness (dharmatā)."[53] Further, the original redaction of such teachings is ultimately to be attributed to the expositor himself, although, says this system, the compiler may conventionally be identified as the questioner (zhu-ba-po) at whose behest the sermon was given.

The introduction of the teaching into the temporal world is described in this system as a 'transmission in symbols for the knowledge holders' (rig-'dzin brda'i brgyud-pa). This refers to a stage of transmission intermediate between direct realization and human language. At this level, the teaching is articulated in symbolic form which is appropriate for the recipients of the teaching known as the 'knowledge holders' (rig'-dzin) of the upper strata of the Vajrayāna pantheon.

Finally, the process of transmission in the human world is described by the phrase 'transmission into the ears of people' (gang-zag snyan-khung gi brgyud-pa), an oral communication, which may later undergo textual codification.

Several issues are raised by this system. Most significant is the assertion that the primary communication of a Buddhist teaching involves no duality between expositor and listener.[54] This notion reinforces the assumption that the advanced realization of the visionary qualifies him to receive the authentic revelation. It also is the theoretical basis upon which the sage could present a visionary document as the words of the Buddha or Ḍākinī, with no mention of his own role in the text's formulation. Since all differences between the Buddha and himself are ultimately non-existent, a distinction between a text's author and its enlightened source would be doctrinally inappropriate.

Some of the concepts described in this system are not exclusive to visionary Buddhism. We may compare the notion of the non-verbal nature of the authentic transmission to the Ch'an story of Mahākaśyapa's comprehension of the Dharma when the Buddha worldlessly displayed a flower.[55] In addition, the notion of the Buddha's ability to convey a teaching in a symbolic form appropriate to the listener may be identified in some of the early sūtras.[56]

These notions became predominant in the schools that propagated visionary systems, and determined the ways in which the revealed material was transmitted. In particular, the concept of deep and esoteric teachings being communicable in oral form only seems to have appealed to the Tibetan visionary schools on a large scale. This

accounts for the numerous secret and oral traditions known as the Whispered Lineages (snyan-brgyud), a term which also applies to the text of such teachings once they are redacted at some chronological distance from the inception of the tradition. The standard explanation of the Whispered Lineages is that the advanced tantric practices are unsuitable for any but the initiated few who have direct and personal contact with a qualified teacher.

The emphasis on the oral transmission of the Dharma in Tibetan visionary Buddhism can be traced to the Indian Mahāsiddhas and visionaries. The Siddhas' rejection of the complexities of the tantric systems in favor of the immediate and experiential quality of the Mahāmudrā "no meditation" doctrine is indicative of an iconoclastic sentiment that was also reflected in their unconventional lifestyles and approach to the practice of Buddhism.[57] It may be suggested that their lack of subservience to authority, scriptural and otherwise, was concomitant to their attempt to supplant the established traditions with what was felt to be a more authentic representation of the teachings of the Buddha.

It may also be observed that esoteric proscriptions and insistence on oral transmission in no small way increases the prestige and power of the teacher. The necessity for direct instruction insures the position of he who is thereby defined as the only one qualified to impart such teachings. In Tibet, a general fascination with the charismatic figure helped give rise to the overriding importance of the guru in Tibetan Buddhism (hence the term Lamaism). The exalted status of the guru, often proclaimed in Tibetan writing as equivalent to that of the Buddha himself,[58] weakens the necessity for the written

tradition. In such a context, what would be more valued than the secret instructions from the guru himself?

The written word thus being placed in a subordinate position, it follows that there was a rather casual attitude about the codification of a text. Within these traditions there was no objection, in fact it was a commonly accepted practice, that the text of a teaching could be written up by a disciple at any point along the lineage line, as long as he was recognized to have received the genuine teaching. Such thinking, then, accounts for the differing forms of a "teaching of Thang-stong," written by various figures in the tradition who felt quite free to improvise and embellish the material to suit the needs of their own students at the time.

Thus, a complex set of doctrines and beliefs renders the task of determining the authorship of the visionary core texts problematical. That this issue has been deliberately hedged by the tradition itself is reflected in the fact that nowhere in the biographies of Thang-stong is there a reference to his codification or redaction of his visionary systems. This omission contrasts with the biographies' copious descriptions of the visions themselves and the circumstances in which they occurred.

In some cases we do have independent and dateable commentaries to the visionary core texts which establish the criteria for assessing the form of the core text at the time that the commentary was written, and which help in identifying the original author of the core text. Yet for the most part the dating and ascription of this literature remains in a situation reminiscent of that of the Buddhist canon itself, which was probably set down no earlier than four centuries after the

Buddha's demise, leaving much room for question on the source and original form of the varying recensions.

In their philosophical, doctrinal, and meditational content, the visionary systems were primarily indebted to the Buddhist canonical traditions upon which they were based. In order to assess the full significance of visionary Buddhism in Tibet, it is important to identify which elements were assimilated directly from these older traditions, and concomitantly to determine what factors constituted true innovations. Incidential to these considerations, we may also make some estimation of how creative or "revelatory" the system was, or conversely, whether the visionary claim was devised for the aggrandizement of the spiritual status of a teacher or lineage.

Such a study necessitates a broad review of the religious, philosophical and cultural background that was assimilated in the vision. In scientific studies of transic states, it has been shown that the content of the experience is determined by cultural context and training, in fact all stored mental data, in much the same way that a dream is made up of elements of the dreamer's daily life and beliefs. The mystic, visionary, or shaman interprets the mental events that transpire in his trance state according to the language and symbols of his mythic world view.[59]

Visionary Buddhims's debt to the general themes of Buddhism and of shamanism has been noted above. However the framework to which the contents of the visionary systems are most specifically related is the tantric Buddhism that had been established in Tibet by the eighth century A.D. The iconographical figures, meditation systems, and

doctrines of the Discovered Treasures and Pure Visions are drawn primarily from the tantras, and therefore are most immediately comparable to those traditions.

In order to identify to which of the tantric cycles a visionary system is linked, the overall canon of tantras to which it belongs must first be determined. The two tantric canons in Tibetan Buddhism are the Old Tantras (rnying-ma'i rgyud), which are said to have been translated during the Tibetan dynastic period;[60] and the New Tantras (gsar-ma'i rgyud) which were translated during the second propagation of Buddhism in Tibet.[61]

The Old Tantras are by and large only to be found in the 100,000 Old Tantras (rNying ma'i brgyud 'bum).[62] This collection was redacted by Ratna Gling-pa in the 15th century (just during Thang-stong's lifetime). With a few exceptions, these texts had not been accepted by Bu-ston as having authentic Indic origin, and were omitted in the latter's 14th century redaction of the bKa'-'gyur which includes the New Tantras. However, some of the Old Tantras were acknowledged by the schools following the New Tantras. As an example, Sa-skya Paṇḍita, of a 'new sect,' is said to have discovered the Sanskrit manuscript of the Vajrakīlatantra, an Old Tantra, in the library of Sa-skya in the 12th century.[63] We may also note here that the Old Tantras are almost without exception the canonical referents for the Discovered Treasure systems.

Both the Old and New Tantras are divided into various levels or vehicles (yāna) based on doctrinal considerations. The Old Tantras are classified into nine vehicles.[64] The last three of these are further subdivisions of the Anuttara, which in the New Tantras system

is the highest level. These three further vehicles in the Old Tantras are the Mahāyoga, Anuyoga, and Atiyoga.[65]

The bsKyed-pa Mahāyoga[66] has two sections, that of scripture (rgyud-sde), and of practice (sgrub-sde). Most noteworthy in the scripture section is the Māyājāla (sGyu 'phrul drva pa)[67] group of tantras, which includes the rDo rje sems dpa'i rgyud 'phrul drva pa,[68] and the Guhyagarbha (gSang ba snying po).[69] The Guhyagarbha is one of the foremost canonical referents for the Discovered Treasures. The practice section contains the teachings of the bKa'-brgyad, the main system attributed to Padmasaṁbhava.[70]

The Atiyoga tantras are divided into three sections, which concern mind (sems-sde), experience (klong-sde), and guidance (man-ngag sde).[71] The philosophy of the Atiyoga is labelled rDzogs-chen (lit. 'Great Completion')[72] which may be compared to the Mahāmudrā philosophy of the Anuttara vehicle of the New Tantras.[73]

The Old Tantras and the traditions associated with them had a far reaching influence on the development of Tibetan visionary Buddhism. There is a striking similarity between the traditional history of the Atiyoga tantras in India[74] and the Tibetan reports of revelation from the 13th and 14th centuries. The descriptions of the transmission of the Pure Visions and Discovered Treasures seem to be modelled directly on the 'whispered transmission' (snyan-brgyud) and 'elucitative transmission' (bshad-brgyud) described in the Atiyoga's guidance section.[75]

The Old Tantras are largely unknown in Western studies of Tibetan Buddhism. In contrast, the New Tantras have received considerably more attention and analysis. The major texts have been translated

in Western languages, as have been exegetical works on the structure of the New Tantras as a whole. In many cases the Sanskrit or Prakit manuscripts of the New Tantras are extant. Some of the most well known New Tantras are the <u>Hevajra</u>,[76] the <u>Cakrasaṃvara</u>,[77] the <u>Guhyasamāja</u>,[78] and the <u>Kālacakra</u>.[79] We may also mention the <u>Padmajāla</u>[80] and the <u>Mahākāla</u>[81] tantras, which figure in Thang-stong's traditions.

The New Tantras are assigned to one of four vehicles: the Kriyā, Caryā, Yoga, and Anuttara. These classes are distinguished in terms of the degree of external ritual, versus internal realization, stressed in each system. The Kriyā tantras are said to be concerned almost exclusively with external ritual, the Anuttara tantras to be divested of ritual and to be entirely concerned with inner realization, and the Caryā and Yoga to contain a mixture of the two elements in varying degrees. The Anuttara may be subdivided into the 'male tantras' (<u>pha-rgyud</u>), 'female tantras' (<u>ma-brgyud</u>), and 'non-dual tantras' (<u>gnyis-med rgyud</u>), although the criteria for this division vary widely.[82] The systematization of the New Tantras is described in depth in the 15th century exegesis of the Buddhist tantras by mKhas-grub rJe.[83]

The tantric vehicle to which a visionary system is affiliated may often be deduced by analyzing the structure of the visualization scheme. In general, visualization of the Buddha or deity is divided into the 'production stage' (<u>utpannakrama</u>), which describes the meditative creation of the image, and the 'completion stage' (<u>saṃpannakrama</u>) which concerns the philosophical realization that results from the visualization.[84] The two stages are variously stressed in the different tantric vehicles, and predominance of one or the other

in a given meditative system is indicative of its canonical affiliation. Moreover, the technique that is prescribed in the production stage indicates the vehicle to which the system is connected. In the more esoteric practices (Kriyā or Caryā tantras) the Buddha or deity is visualized 'in-front' (bdun-bskyed) of the practitioner. The more advanced technique (in the Yoga or Anuttara tantras) is the visualization of the Buddha 'as-self' (bdag-bskyed), whereby the practitioner actually "becomes" the Buddha during the meditation period.[85] Another significant question is whether the system eschews or encourages outer ritual, which would correspond to whether the meditation may be assigned to the Anuttara or the Kriyā vehicles. In many cases, varying versions of the same visualization system, with more or less ritual, were devised in accordance with the varying types of practitioners.

Specific textual affiliation can be inferred through the identification of the iconographic figures. The principal figure of the meditation system gives clear indication of such affiliation. For the Anuttara tantras the principal figure is classified under the rubric of heruka. In the Kriyā and Caryā tantras the main figure is usually an Enjoyment Body (saṁbhogakāya) figure such as Avalokiteśvara or Mañjuśrī. Thus, for example, when Cakrasaṁvara in heruka form appears in several of the sādhanas connected to Thang-stong's vision, we may look for connections to the Cakrasaṁvara-tantra and to the Anuttara vehicle.

The subsidiary figures who appear in a visionary system may also reflect textual affiliation, especially if these figures are known to originate in the maṇḍala of a particular tantric cycle.

Thus, the prominent position of Vajravārāhī, the consort of Cakrasaṃvara, in the visionary sādhanas of Thang-stong indicates affiliation to the Cakrasaṃvaratantra tradition.

Other significant figures are the ultimate source of the visionary system, and the expositor of the revelation. The ultimate source will be listed as the first member of the system's lineage, and is often a Dharma Body (dharmakāya) Buddha. The expositor is the figure that appears in the vision and preaches the revelation. A wide range of Buddhas and deities who function in these roles appear in the visionary systems of Thang-stong. Padmasaṃbhava as Emanation Body (nirmāṇakāya) is the expositor of the 'Chi med dpal ster; the ultimate source of the system is Amitābha as Dharma Body (sNang-ba mTha'-yas). The expositor of the gSang spyod snayan brgyud is Ma-gcig Lab-sgron, who is defined as the Emanation Body of Vajravārāhī as Enjoyment Body; the ultimate source of the system is the deity Prajñāpāramitā as Dharma Body. The Buddha Vajradhara as Dharma Body is cited as the ultimate source of the Shangs-pa systems that were revealed by Niguma as Emanation Body. The primordial Buddha (ādibuddha) Samantabhadra of the rDzogs-chen systems is the ultimate source of the Grub thob thugs tig. In each case, the identification of these figures can suggest the canonical referents and textual affiliations of the visionary system.

The canonical or textual referent does not completely describe the source of a visionary system. The precedents and related systems in Tibetan Buddhism need also be identified. These older systems were studied and assimilated by the visionaries (in the case of Thang-stong we know much of his early education) and were the immediate

point of departure in the devising of the visionary system. Further, the older Tibetan systems themselves were often innovative reinterpretations of still older systems. For example, Thang-stong had a vision of the Six Teachings of Niguma, which is closely related to the system by the same name of the Shangs-pa school, which is in turn related to the Six Teachings of Naropa, which is in turn affiliated to the Cakrasaṁvaratantra. Thus the intermediate influences must be recognized in order to assess the debts, and the innovations, of a particular visionary system.

Once the canonical and sectarian affiliations are established for the system as a whole, the genre of each of the texts will indicate its specific function within the system. The visionary core genres have been discussed above. The secondary literature based on the core may be divided into three broad classes: history (lo-rgyus), exegesis (khrid), and praxis (nyams-len). The latter two classes include a large number of generic types. Suffice it to list here a few of the practical genres which commonly appear in the systems of Thang-stong: visualization instructions of the sādhana (sgrub-thabs); initiation rites (dbang-bskur), which sometimes include historical accounts as well; rituals granting permission to practice the system (rjes-gnang); and supplications to the lineage (brgyud-'debs) which also contain useful historical information.

The following chart summarizes the categories, in descending order from the general to the specific, that are relevant to the analysis of the textual affiliation and structural schematization of a Buddhist visionary system. The items entered under literary

genre are suggestive of some of the broad groups but are not meant as an exhaustive listing.

A. Canon of Tantras
- Old Tantras (*rnying-ma'i rgyud*)
- New Tantras (*gsar-ma'i rgyud*)

B. Doctrinal Level
- nine vehicles
- four vehicles

C. Iconographic Figures:
- source of the system
- expositor of the revelation
- principal figure in the sādhana
- other figures

D. Specific Textual Affiliation/Precedent in Tibetan Systems

E. Literary Genre:
- core
  - visionary document
  - ancient writing
- sādhana
- initiation
- historical account
- commentary
- liturgy
- other rituals

As a final note, we present an example of how the canonical affiliations and internal generic hierarchy of the visionary systems of Thang-stong were analysed by the tradition itself. In a 19th century work, the scholar Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas asserts that the lCags-zam tradition of Thang-stong, here treated as a single unit, forms a self-sufficient path to enlightenment.[86] The teachings of Thang-stong are reduced to a five-fold system which is based on the *Guhyagarbhatantra* from the *Māyājāla* cycle.[87] The view (*lta-ba*) of the lCags-zam path is said to be the *rNam thar sgo gsum* vision; the meditation (*sgom-pa*) is the *Phyag rgya chen po ga'u ma* (part of Thang-stong's Shangs-pa vision); the practice (*spyod-pa*) is the

gSang spyod snyan brgyud; the effective development (bogs-'don thabs-lam chen-po)[88] is Thang-stong's version of the Six Teachings of Niguma; and the result ('bras-bu) is a rDzogs-chen system related to the dGongs pa zang thal.[89] Thang-stong's Mahākāla system known as the mGon po bdun rdzogs is counted as an additional lCags-zam tradition.

With the exception of the rNam thar sgo gsum[90] and the dGongs pa zang thal, the texts of these systems are available and are discussed in the following chapters. It should be noted however that Kong-sprul's analytical scheme is not substantiated by our findings, and it is to be regretted that he does not indicate the grounds on which he organized the material in this way. Further there is no reference to this scheme in Thang-stong's own writings nor in the work of his early commentators. Finally, the question remains of how the other traditions of Thang-stong, which were known to Kong-sprul but not included in his analysis, would fit into this five-fold system.

Notes

1. See John Brough, "Thus Have I Heard..."

1a. Ratnaguṇa, 3-4. See Edward Conze, trans., The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines and Its Verse Summary, p. 9.

2. The names of these two schools are indicative of the importance of scriptures--the Vaibhāṣikas were those who followed the Vibhāṣas, whereas the Sautrāntikas cited the sūtras.

3. The three classes described by Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas, gTer rnam rgya brtsa, p. 297 seq. and 683 seq. Similar discussion by bDud-'joms 'Jigs-bral Ye-shes rDo-rje, sNga 'gyur byung tshul, chapter 6. Eva Dargyay, The Rise of Esoteric Buddhims in Tibet, pp. 90-91, fails to distinguish the third class of Pure Vision in her translation of bDud-'joms's passage. Further, her phrase "dag-snang gi gter-kha" (p. 195) does not appear in the Tibetan original. An early study of the Discovered Treasures in Western sources is Per Kvaerne, "Bon-po Studies: The A khrid System of Meditation, Part 2."

4. See nn. 60 and 62 below.

5. Kong-sprul, gTer rnam rgya rtsa, p. 684, cites a passage from a sūtra (unidentified) in his explanation of the Treasures Discovered in the Mind:" 'Mañju, just as the four elements come out of the treasury of space, all phenomena come out of the treasures of consciousness of the Jina. Thus should the usage of the term 'treasure' (gter) be understood.' Accordingly it is said that a treasure of Dharma issues forth from out of the center (klong) of the mind of the Venerable Ones." An illustration of how the inspiration is portrayed may be had from a biography of the Treasure discoverer Zhig-po Gling-pa (bDud-'joms, sNga 'gyur byung tshul, pp. 617-621) where Tārā is said to have breathed into him and repeated the affirmation "Alright!" (legs-so) three times, thus inspiring him to write down the sGrol ma'i zab tig Treasure text.

6. The term 'Rediscovered Treasure' accurately translates yang-gter, and not the entire class of gter-ma. However it is used in the latter sense in a number of Western studies.

7. GT-I-1, p. 452. GT-III-1, p. 360, describes the hiding place of the Grub thob thugs tig as "a box of space in the center of clarity" (klong gsal dbyings kyi sgrom bu). Compare dPa'-bo gTsug-lag, mKhas pa'i dga' ston, p. 296: "gter gnas rang sems la chos nyid rang chas su gnas pa ni gter gyi mthar thug ste..."

8. bDud-'joms, sNga 'gyur byung tshul, p. 491 seq., lists the mechanics of this phenomena as 'empowerment through benediction' (smon-lam dbang-bskur) which involves a prayer on the part of the original formulator that the intended discoverer will appear at the proper time; 'prophecy of an authoritative transmission' (bka'-babs lung-bstan) which is an inspiration directed at the future discoverer in the form

of a prophecy which is from the "depths of (Padmasaṁbhava's) realization (dgongs-pa) of the primordial awareness of the reality of that which is symbolized"; and 'entrusting it to the Ḍākinīs and sealing it' (mkha'-'gro gtad-rgya--incorrectly translated by Dargyay, Rise of Esoteric Buddhism, p. 88, as "seal given by spiritual beings") which is the final step whereby the protector of the Treasure (gter-bdag or gter-srung) is appointed, the Treasure is hidden, and is sealed so as to be invisible. Some of the other notions of prophecy (vyākaraṇa) in Buddhism might be compared here.

9. For example, Thang-stong's discovery of the U rgyan thugs kyi yang thig kun bzang dgongs pa tshig 'dus at Zla-ba Phug is described by B-1, p. 114, as having been preceeded by a vision of Vajradhara as Dharma Body, surrounded by eight Siddhas, who said to Thang-stong: "At Zla-ba Phug is something put there by Padmasaṁbhava which is your Dharma-lot. Take out that Dharma treasure!" Thang-stong is then said to have performed an offering feast (gaṇacakra) and a 'maṇi-urging' (? maṇi bskul-pa) with the help of some scholars he had enlisted, and then went alone via magic to Zla-ba Phug to extract the Treasure. His Treasure discovery at bSam-yas mChims-phu is described by B-1, p. 116 seq., as having been guided by a red light from Amitāyus. (see p. 150 below). Thang-stong's opening of the Kong-po area of Tibet and discovery of iron mines there is described by B-1, p. 135 seq., in terms similar to the accounts of his Treasure discoveries: The residents of the surrounding area are said to have informed him that the keys and maps to the region had previously been hidden by Padmasaṁbhava and were now being guarded by Vajravārāhī. Thang-stong performed an offering feast at sMan-mo-sgang and found that all the "doors of his vision were opened" (p. 135: "...gzigs snang gi sgo thams cad bye yong lags"). He was thus enabled to find the maps' place of concealment. At the cave he beseeched the maṇḍala of Ḍākinīs with an elaborate song requesting supramundane powers (pp. 137-138). Then a copper box came out of a crack in the rock, which contained the map, keys, instructions, and prophecies which had been hidden there by Padmasaṁbhava (p. 139). Thang-stong then proceeded to discover the iron mines (p. 141: "Grub thob chen po rang gis gter nes bton pa" describes his discovery of iron.)

10. It will be noted that the terms Pure Vision and Discovered Treasure coalesce in the case of the GT. See p. 237 seq. below.

11. There is a possibility of confusion here, in that many successive lineages were originally conceived as direct lineages. See discussion p. 104 seq. below of the various visionary Avalokiteśvara systems from India that were considered to be successive lineages in Tibet. It seems that the distinction is a Tibetan one, and is applied in a relative sense only.

12. The meaning of bka' here not the same as in the bka'-ma of the Spoken Transmission, but instead has the sense of 'authorization' or 'pronouncement,' in regard to the transmission ('babs) of a major tradition.

13. The Whispered Transmission, though counted as one of the seven

authentic transmissions, is not a primary mode of transmission, but rather describes the passing down of the tradition once it has been formulated. The Whispered Lineages transmitted teachings that were considered esoteric and which could only be communicated orally from teacher to disciple. See p. 81 below.

14. Conze, The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines, p. 277 seq.

15. Sudhana's visionary journey culminated in his reaching the "Tower of Maitreya." See P. L. Vaidya, ed., Gandavyūhasūtra, p. 368 seq., and throughout.

16. See Leon Hurvitz, trans., Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma, p. 183 seq.

17. Stephan Beyer, "Notes on the Vision Quest in Early Mahāyāna."

18. See biographies of the Siddhas in Debriprasad Chattopadhyaya, Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India. See also Tāranātha, Yi dam rgya mtsho'i sgrub thabs rin chen 'byung gnas, which is a compilation of sādhanas based on visions by the Siddhas.

19. The three sources (of revelation): The guru, the chosen deity (yi-dam, Skt. iṣṭadevatā), and the Ḍākinī.

20. Kong-sprul, gTer rnam rgya rtsa, p. 683, and bDud-'joms, sNga 'gyur 'byung tshul, pp. 496-7.

21. As in the sNang-gsum literature of the Sa-skya-pas, the third type of appearance (snang) is the dag-pa snang-pa. Possible relation to the śubhapratibhāsa samādhi as in Mahāvyutpatti 556? It is also significant that the term Pure Vision (dag-snang) shares the same adjective with that of Pure Land (dag-pa'i zhing).

22. As in Buddhaghosa, The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga) XII, 39 seq. Summary of early sources in Har Dayal, The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature, p. 106 seq.

23. See Lewis Lancaster, "Samadhi Names in Buddhist Texts," p. 196 seq.

24. Kong-sprul, gTer rnam rgya rtsa, p. 297 seq., and bDud-'joms, sNga 'gyur byung tshul, p. 487 seq.

25. =? Sāgaranāgarājaparipṛcchā (To. 153, 154, 155, 156).

26. = To. 238.

27. See also Eva Neumaier, "Einig Aspekte de gter-ma Literatur de rNying-ma-pa Schule."

28. See A. F. Anismov, "The Shaman's Tent of the Evenks and the Origin of the Shamanistic Rite."

29. See Douglas Sharon, Wizard of the Four Wings, p. 112 seq., for examples of bird imagery and shape shifting in ecstatic flight experiences.

30. See Mircea Eliade, Myths, Dreams and Mysteries, p. 103 seq.

31. Helmut Hoffmann, The Religions of Tibet, p. 24 seq.

32. B-2, p. 45, describes a Pure Vision occurrence as "Dur khrod ra mo mdo ler mkha' 'gro mas/ Byin rlabs rten 'brel bsgrigs la gsol ba 'debs" ("the causes and conditions for him to be blessed by the Ḍākinī at the Ra-mo-mdo-le cemetery were correct.")

33. See n. 8 above. Beyer, "Notes on the Vision Quest," argues that visions in the sūtras were the result of active quests.

34. A summary of recent scientific studies that relate to shamanic trance states in Odd Norland, "Shamanism and the Unreal."

35. It would be fruitful in this context to investigate the Buddhist theories on the onset of meditative absorption, as expressed in the rūpa-dhyāna practices, and in the scheme of the five margas, particularly the description of the experiences of the nirvedha-bhāgīyas.

36. dPa'-bo gTsug-lag, mKhas pa'i ga' ston, p. 269, description of the Pure Vision as "dngos nyams rmi lam du bla ma yi dam chos skyong gzigs ba bsam las 'das/ Khyad par du skye ba gtan gyi bla ma rig 'dzin pad mas rtag par mngon sum du zhal bstan zhing/"

37. B-2, p. 95: "nyams 'ur langs skad cig la...phebs/"

38. CM-2-C p. 440: "lHag par thugs nyams dang mnal lam lta bu ma yin par/ zangs mdog dpal gyi ri bo'i pho brang chen por sku dngos su byon/"

39. As in B-1, pp. 86-87; p. 90, etc. However, the sense in which this term is applied is rather vague, as in his "magical journey" to Svayaṁbhū (B-1, p. 51 seq.) where most of the teachers he is reported to have met are known to have been long dead at that time. The account in B-1 switches from describing the appearance of some of these teachers in magical terms, e.g., Śabari is said to disappear into a stūpa after giving a sermon, Kukuri into a rainbow (B-1, p. 61), to specifically trying to establish the historicity of the event by stating the teacher's advanced age. e.g., sKal-ldan rDo-rje as being 320 (B-1, p. 61), to imply that he was still alive in the usual sense.

40. B-1, p. 50: "...rmi lam dang 'od gsal 'dres pa'i dag pa'i snang ba byung tshul rgyas pa gsungs..." The clear light and dream states are two of the six states described in the Six Teachings of Naropa/ Niguma. See p. 189 below.

41. Joseph F. Rock, "Contributions to the Shamanism of the Tibetan-Chinese Borderland," p. 796 seq., reports on the shamanic trances he witnessed, including the dipping of the shaman's hands and face in hot oil while chanting protective spells which seemed to prevent any discomfort.

42. See p. 162 seq. below.

43. Kong-sprul, Shes bya mdzod, vol. 4, p. 141, indicates that the Vajrapada may be the work of a Buddha, or a śāstra set down by a visionary. Kong-sprul cites the well known Vajrapadas of the Shangs-pa sect (see p. 202 below, n. 27) and of the Lam -'bras sect set down by Virūpa as examples of the latter type of Vajrapada.

44. GT-III-1, p. 262; SP-1, vol. 1, p. 299. See p. 182 below, n. 27.

45. In GT-III-1, p. 363, mKhyen-brtse the discoverer (here referred to as mDo-sngags Gling-pa, his Treasure discoverer name) is said to have been empowered by Padmasaṁbhava, Vimalamitra, and Mañjuśrī. GT-I-1, p. 452, describes mKhyen-brtse as being better than any other Treasure discoverer, and no different than Thang-stong himself.

46. A typical example may be had from Ri-ked's colophon to P-1, where he signs his name as Old Beggar With Nothing To Do (sprang-rgan bya-btang-pa).

47. The term 'basic text' (gzhung-rtsa) also refers to the ancient writing. See CM-1-c, p. 613.

48. See p. 129 below.

49. See p. 151 below.

50. See p. 191 below.

51. The following summarized from bDud-'joms, sNga 'gyur byung tshul, p. 63 seq.

52. Ibid, p. 70: "...bsdu ba po yang ston pa nyid las gzhan du ma gyur te/"

53. Ibid, p. 70: "...sgra rtog gi yul las brgyal ba'i chos nyid mnyam pa chen por ro gcig pa'i tshul gyis chos kyi 'khor lo bskor ba..."

54. This notion in accord with the Tathāgata-womb (tathāgatagarbha) theory, in that the sentient beings (= listener) are ultimately equated with the Tathāgata (= expositor).

55. Wm. Theodore de Bary, ed., Sources of Chinese Traditions, p. 388.

56. For example, in the Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra, the Buddha's teaching, compared to rain, is said to be able to nourish the various types of sentient beings, here compared to the various types of plants. See

Heinrik Kern and Bunyio Nanjio, ed., Saddharmapuṇḍarīka, chapter 5 (pp. 114-130).

57. See n. 18 above; also Toni Schmid, The Eighty Five Siddhas.

58. See Herbert Guenther, "The Spiritual Teacher in Tibet."

59. The Tibetans also seem to have been aware of how the content of a vision reflects the mental set of the visionary. For example, Kong-sprul, gTer rnam rgya rtsa, p. 684 (quoting the Chos yang dag par sdu pa'i mdo): "The purity of mind of the Bodhisattva is such that precepts appear in accordance with his own mental inclination" to explain the content of the Mental Treasures.

60. The history of the Old Tantras has received little study to date. See George Roerich, Blue Annals, p. 102 seq.; p. 102, n. 1 describes Bu-ston's rejection of the Old Tantras.

61. See Roerich, Blue Annals, p. 204 seq.

62. Published most recently in Sde-dge in this century. A few of the Old Tantras are included in the bKa'-'gyur.

63. See Roerich, Blue Annals, pp. 105-106.

64. Summarized in Zhe-chen rGyal-tshab Padma rNam-rgyal, sNga 'gyur theg dgu'i tshogs bshad mdor bsdud nor bu'i tanbu ra sogs. The nine vehicles are the Śrāvaka vehicle, the Pratyekabuddha vehicle, the Bodhisattva vehicle, the Caryā vehicle, the Kriyā vehicle, the Yoga vehicle, the Mahāyoga vehicle, the Anuyoga vehicle, and the Atiyoga vehicle. Of the last six, the first three are equivalent to the first three vehicles of the New Tantras, and the latter three are subsumed under the New Tantras' Anuttara vehicle.

65. Another three-fold classification, mdo-sgyu-sems gsum, is a general categorization of the three highest vehicles of the Old Tantras: mdo, from the 'Dus pa'i mdo's title, is the Anuyoga; sgyu, from the sGyu 'phrul drva pa (Māyājāla)'s title, is Mahāyoga; and sems refers to sems-phyogs, the statements on the nature of mind in the Atiyoga. See Roerich, Blue Annals, p. 191 seq.; and Thu'u-bkwan, Grub mtha' thams cad, chapter on the rNying-ma sect.

66. See gDams ngag mdzod, vol. Ka, pp. 1-102, for works relating to this vehicle.

67. The New Tantra version of this text is included in the Yogatantra section of the bKa' 'gyur (To. 466), but the commentaries to it in the bsTan 'gyur are in the Anuttara section (To. 2501-2531).

68. See To. 833.

69. To. 829; 830; 831; 832; 834; 837. See Roerich Blue Annals, p. 103 seq. See also Alex Wayman, "Guhyasamājatantra, Reflections on the Word and its Meaning," and "The Title and Textual Affiliation of the Guhyagarbhatantra."

70. A major exposition of the bKa'-brgyad system is Nyang-ral Nyi-ma 'Od-zer, bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa'i chos skor. For the historical attribution of this system to Padmasaṁbhava, see Dargyay, Rise of Esoteric Buddhism, pp. 31-61. See also Eva Neumaier, "bKa'-brgyad rang-byung-rang shar, ein rJogs c'en Tantra."

71. See gDams ngag mdzod, vol. Ka, p. 159 seq.

72. See Samten Karmay, "A discussion on the doctrinal position of rDzogs-chen from the 10th to the 13th centuries."

73. For a comparison of Mahāmudrā, rDzogs-chen, and Mādhyamika, see sDe-gzhung Kun-dga' bsTan-pa'i Nyi-ma, Nges don phyag rdzogs dbu gsum gi lta sgom gyi gnad mdor bsdud 'khrul bral legs bshad mkhas pa'i zhal lung.

76. David Snellgrove, ed. and trans., The Hevajra Tantra.

77. Sections translated by Kazi Dawa-Samdrup, Shrichakrasambhara Tantra; and Shinichi Tsuda, The Saṁvarodaya Tantra.

78. Benotosh Bhattacharyya ed., Guhyasamājatantra. See also Alex Wayman, Yoga of the Guhyasamājatantra; The Arcane Lore of Forty Verses.

79. To. 363, 364. No English translation has been published to date.

80. To. 681. See also Bo-dong Pan-chen, gSung 'bum, vol. 23.

81. See p. 208 below, nn. 1 and 2.

82. See Herbert Guenther, Buddhist Philosophy in Theory and Practice, pp. 204-209.

83. Ferdinand Lessing and Alex Wayman, trans., Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems.

84. See Lessing and Wayman, Introduction, p. 331 seq., and p. 219 seq.

85. See Lessing and Wayman, Introduction, p. 163 seq. mKhas-grub-rje reports on the controversy in Tibet regarding whether as-self visualization is possible in the Kriyā tantras. He states that the previous Tibetan lamas (= rNying-ma-pas?) held that as-self visualization only appears in the higher tantras, but that the dGe-lugs-pa position differed from that view.

86. GT-I-3, p. 599 seq.

87. GT-I-3, pp. 601-2. Kong-sprul quotes a well known verse concerning the five-fold classification from the "Shin tu gsang ba man ngag snying po" chapter of the Guhyagarbhatantra.

88. The usage of the term bogs-'don is unclear. Ngag-dbang bsTan-'dzin Nor-bu, gCod yul nyon mongs zhi byed kyi bka' gter bla ma, p. 4, uses this term to refer to gCod, stating "gsang sngags bla med kyi nye lam bogs 'don gyi gdams ngag bdud kyi spyod yul." Also Kong-sprul, Shes bya kun khyab mdzod, vol. 4, p. 100: "...thabs shes kyi gnad kyi gdams pas lam gyi bogs 'don," in a passage describing gCod.

89. The major literary cycle of the Northern Treasure (Byang-gter) system. This is the only known reference to a work attributed to Thang-stong that is affiliated to the Northern Treasures. Thang-stong's study of this system in his youth, however, has been noted by B-1, p. 49 seq.

90. See p. 224 seq., below for a discussion of the reports of a vision of the rNam thar sgo gsum by Thang-stong.

Part Two: The Literary Formulation of the Visionary Systems

Chapter 4: Traditions Traced to the Visions of Thang-stong rGyal-po

The 'Gro don mkha' khyab ma Avalokiteśvara Sādhana

Thang-stong's sādhana for the four-armed Avalokiteśvara, entitled *'Gro don mkha' khyab ma*[1] (herein abbreviated KKM), is perhaps his most well known work. The text had wide distribution and made a significant contribution to the already well established Avalokiteśvara cult of 15th century Tibet.

Avalokiteśvara's prominent position in Tibetan Buddhism was preceded by a long development in India. He was one of the first Bodhisattvas to emerge from the Mahāyāna sūtras to rival the Buddha Śākyamuni in importance. The Bodhisattva figures in such sūtras as the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*,[2] the *Karaṇḍavyūha*,[3] and to a lesser extent in the *Sukhāvatīvyūha*[4] where we have an early indication of Avalokiteśvara's connection with Amitābha. The Bodhisattva's role in the *Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya*[5] shows the connection he came to have with the Prajñāpāramitā. Along with his wrathful counterpart Hayagrīva, Avalokiteśvara was later incorporated into the Vajrayāna pantheon in scriptures such as the *Padmajālatantra*.[6]

Indian images of Avalokiteśvara are known to have existed by the Gandharan period.[7] Later there developed a variety of iconographic forms which are theoretically said to correspond to the Bodhisattva's commitment to aid beings in a variety of ways.

Avalokiteśvara can usually be identified by the presence of a figure of Amitābha on his crown, indicating connection to that Buddha and a place in the 'lotus family' (padmakula) of Jinas. The earliest Avalokiteśvara figures are standing, in princely attire, with one face and two hands which often hold lotus and vase. A two-handed seated figure in the 'position of naturalness' (lalitāsana) is also common. By the time Buddhism entered Tibet, the iconography of Avalokiteśvara was well established, ranging from the simple figures to the Bodhisattva with eleven heads, and the one with 1,000 eyes. Bhattacharyya lists 108 forms,[8] a tradition which stems from the fully developed tantric period of the Pāla dynasty in India.

The four-armed seated Avalokiteśvara became the main patron deity of Tibet, and is believed to be incarnate in the Dalai Lamas. This figure is also the subject of Thang-stong's KKM. One form of the four-armed Avalokiteśvara, with two hands in the attitude of respect (añjali) and the other two hands holding a rosary and lotus, is called Ṣaḍakṣara[9] ('six syllables' refers to Avalokiteśvara's mantra oṁ maṇi padme hūṁ). The form Cintamaṇi is the same as Ṣaḍakṣara except that he holds a wish-fulfilling gem (cintamaṇi) in his two inner hands.

Avalokiteśvara took on a unique significance in Tibet. Although traditional accounts of the Bodhisattva's importance during the early monarchy have been shown in recent studies to be apocryphal, the legend was extensive by the 12 century, as reflected in the Maṇi bka' 'bum Discovered Treasure text of that century.[10] The popular story which attributes the origin of the Tibetan race to the offspring of Avalokiteśvara in monkey form and a red-faced demoness of the

rocks, is part of the Maṇi bka' 'bum tradition.[11] The legend of the first appearance of Buddhism in Tibet is also traditionally connected to Avalokiteśvara: The golden scripture which magically appeared on the roof of the semi-historical king lHa Tho-tho-ri gNyan-btsan's palace and marked the onset of royal patronage of Buddhism was the Karaṇḍavyūha.[12]

Avalokiteśvara became a symbol of the enlightened political ruler. King Srong-btsan sGam-po, who formally introduced Buddhism into Tibet and who consolidated Tibetan military power in the 7th century, is held to have been an incarnation of the Bodhisattva. The Dalai Lamas, religious and political leaders of Tibet from the 16th to the 20th centuries, are said to be embodiments of Avalokiteśvara, and the same claim is made for the Karma-pa line.

For the average Tibetan, Avalokiteśvara became a personal link with Buddhist practice. Due perhaps to the compassionate nature that is attributed to this Bodhisattva, he was viewed as more approachable and less threatening than the wrathful deities of tantrism, and he became the most popular chosen deity (yi-dam) for both the monastic and lay sectors. The stereotype of the Tibetan who constantly chants "maṇis" with rosary and prayer wheel in hand is hardly exaggerated.

The basic canonical authority cited for the Tibetan tantric traditions of Avalokiteśvara is the Padmajālantantra, which is generally classified with the Kriyāyoga tantras.[13] The bsTan-'gyur contains several sādhanas based on the Padmajāla[14]

The bsTan-'gyur also includes sādhanas and prayers (stotra) for Avalokiteśvara by Indians who are said to have experienced

independent visions of this Bodhisattva. It seems that Atīśa was instrumental in standardizing the meditation of the four-armed Ṣaḍakṣara.[15] The Indian siddha Mitrayogin (or, Ajitamitragupta)[16] favored the two-armed Khasarpaṇi Avalokiteśvara[17] and the related Cittaviśrāmana[18] teachings. His works on these subjects survive in the bsTan-'gyur, and his name is closely associated with the Indic Avalokiteśvara tradition in Tibet. The nun (bhikṣuṇī) Lakṣmī[19] is best known for a sādhana of the 11-headed Avalokiteśvara. Several entries in the bsTan-'gyur are attributed to her, including an often quoted prayer to the Bodhisattva.[20] The Tibetan scholar Tāranātha listed 15 major Indic Avalokiteśvara traditions in his 17th century Rin chen 'byung gnas.[21] These and other Indian works that were preserved in Tibetan translation were the prototypes for the elaborate meditative systems concerning Avalokiteśvara that developed in Tibet.

The earliest Tibetan traditions of meditation on Avalokiteśvara were the dMar-khrids (systems based on personal experience and vision). The dMar-khrids were codified by Tibetans, but were drawn from Indian canonical sources. In content the various dMar-khrids are similar, the differences being in minor detail and in the lineages of transmitters. The list of the dMar-khrids varies, but the main traditions seem to have been current by the beginning of the 12th century. The Blue Annals (14th century) discusses the major dMar-khrids,[22] and the Khrid brgya (16th century), which is based on earlier sources, presents them in much the same form as they exist today.[23] A modern analysis[24] lists the dMar-khrids which were formulated by:

1. Bhikṣuṇī Śrī (Lakṣmī)
2. The King
3. Tshem-pu

4. Zla-rgyal (Candradvaja)
5. sKyer-sgang-pa

Each of these figures is held to have been an incarnation of Avalokiteśvara. Bhikṣuṇī Lakṣmī has been described above. 'The King' refers to Srong-btsan sGam-po (609-649 A.D.), believed to have enstated the ten good deeds (daśakuśala karmāṇi) as law in Tibet. The King's dMar-khrid is extracted from the sādhanas of the Maṇi bka' 'bum,[25] and incorporates the ten deeds. The identity of Zla-rgyal is unclear. He was reported to have been in Tibet, and to have been a teacher of Sa-chen Kun-dga' sNying-po and of Phag-mo Gru-pa, which would place him in the 11th century.[26] Tshem-pu-pa is referred to as a Siddha , was also of the 11th century, and may have been a teacher of Byang-chub-'od.[27] sKyer-sgang-pa was a 12th century Shangs-pa teacher.[28] He was also the inheritor of Atīśa's bKa'-dam-pa teaching of the Four Deities (bka'-dam lha bzhi), one of which is Avalokiteśvara. All of the dMar-khrid traditions were established as authoritative successive transmissions by Thang-stong's period.

A second group of sādhanas which had gained currency by the 15th century consists of the Discovered Treasures concerning Avalokiteśvara. Beginning with the various discoveries of Nyang-ral Nyi-ma 'Od-zer (1136-1203) and Grub-thob dNgos-grub (which include the Maṇi bka' 'bum), there appeared numerous Avalokiteśvara Treasure cycles from the 13th to the 16th centuries. Some of the major traditions are: the Thugs rje chen po yang snying 'dus pa of Guru Chos-dbang (1212-1273); the Yang gsang bla med of Sangs-rgyas Gling-pa (1340-1396); the Thugs rje gsang ba 'dus pa of Ratna Gling-pa (1403-1478); and the Ngan song rang grol of 'Ja'-tson sNying-po (1586-1656). These teachings

generally present highly esoteric and complex systems of meditation on Avalokiteśvara with little relation to the dMar-khrids. They are interesting for the extent to which they synthesize the Avalokiteśvara meditative traditions with the terminology of the Old Tantras.

A third class of Avalokiteśvara practice in Tibet consists of the creative, syncretic systems by prominent Tibetan teachers. These systems were based on the author's training and personal experience. Such traditions are too numerous to list; two outstanding examples are the Thugs rje chen po dang phyag rgya chen po zung 'jug tu nyams su len tshul[29] of the Sa-skya school, which synthesizes the Avalokiteśvara tradition with the Mahāmudrā tradition; and Karma Chags-med's eclectic Thugs rje chen po'i dmar khrid phyag rdzogs zung 'jug gi skor,[30] which incorporates the Avalokiteśvara, Mahāmudrā and rDzogs-chen traditions.

It is in relation to this complex array of Avalokiteśvara traditions that we may begin to understand Thang-stong's contribution. Both the biographical accounts and the content of the KKM itself attest to the degree to which he assimilated this material.

According to Thang-stong's testimony as presented in B-1, his connection with Avalokiteśvara went back to a life in the distant past. He gave an account of this lifetime to some of hs students while they were touring Kashmir and were discussing the subject of former lives.[31] Thang-stong told them that 730 lives previous, during an age of another Buddha, he was born as the monk Padmakāra.[32] He remained in retreat from the age of 20 until he was 80, fasting and meditating on Avalokiteśvara and the mantra oṁ maṇi padme hūṁ. During that time he

composed a prayer to the Bodhisattva. The text of this prayer is found in a number of anthologies[33] in addition to being included in B-1, and it has become an integral part of Thang-stong's legacy as an emanation of Avalokiteśvara. It translates as follows:

I supplicate Guru Avalokiteśvara!
I supplicate Chosen Deity Avalokiteśvara!
I supplicate Excellent Noble Avalokiteśvara!
I supplicate Excellent Refuge Avalokiteśvara!
I supplicate Loving Protector Avalokiteśvara!
Compassionate Ruler, please compassionately consider:

In the endless Saṁsāra, there are innumerable wandering beings,
Experiencing intolerable suffering.
There is no other saviour for them besides you, Protector—
Please grant your blessing so that (they) will attain omniscient Buddha(hood).

May all those sentient beings,
Who by accumulating bad karma since beginningless time,
Were under the sway of hatred and were born in hell,
And who are (now) experiencing the suffering of heat and cold,
Be born close to you, the excellent divinity.
Oṁ maṇi padme hūṁ.

May all those sentient beings,
Who, by accumulating bad karma since beginningless time,
Were under the sway of stinginess and were born in the land of hungry ghosts,
And who are (now) experiencing the suffering of hunger and thirst,
Be born in the excellent heaven Potala.
Oṁ maṇi padme hūṁ.

May all those sentient beings,
Who, by accumulating bad karma since beginningless time,
Were under the sway of stupidity and were born as animals,
And who are (now) experiencing the suffering of being dull and dumb,
Be born close to you, Protector.
Oṁ maṇi padme hūṁ.

May all those sentient beings,
Who, by accumulating bad karma since beginningless time,
Were under the sway of jealousy and were born into the realm of titans,
And who are (now) experiencing the suffering of fighting and quarrelling
Be born in Potala Heaven.
Oṁ maṇi padme hūṁ.

May all those sentient beings,
Who, by accumulating bad karma since beginningless time,
Were under the sway of pride and were born into the realm of gods,
And who are (now) experiencing the suffering of dying and descending,
Be born in Potala Heaven.
Oṁ maṇi padme hūṁ.

As for me,
Throughout all the lives I live,
May I save all beings in impure lands,
With actions like that of Avalokiteśvara,
And may I spread the excellent utterance of the six syllables in the ten directions.

By supplicating you, the excellent Noble One,
May all the beings who become my disciples,
Persevere in meritorious activities which are cognizant of cause and effect,
And maintain the Dharma for the benefit of beings.

The propagation of the mantra of Avalokiteśvara is portrayed in B-1 as a major goal of Thang-stong's life.[34] As a symbolic expression of this orientation he is said to have uttered the mantra at birth.[35] As a youth, he taught a group of traders that he had temporarily joined to recite 500 "maṇis" as the minimum daily Buddhist practice.[36] Throughout his life he transmitted the mantra to disciples ranging from the tribal peoples of Klo, the local shepherds of his native area, and an assembly of "gods, men, and goblins" at bSam-yas Monastery, to such notables as the sixth Karma-pa mThong-ba Don-ldan.[37] He is also said to have instituted rules for the continuous recitation of maṇis on lCags-po-ri Mountain in Lhasa during holidays.[38]

B-1 tells us that Thang-stong received his first Avalokiteśvara initiation from his uncle Bla-ma Grags-bzang,[39] along with instruction in the Avalokiteśvara dMar-khrids and the Maṇi bka' 'bum. His main

mentor in the Avalokiteśvara teachings was bKa'-lnga-pa dPal-'byor Shes-rab, from whom Thang-stong is said to have received not only instruction in the successive transmission of the dMar-khrids and the Ma nam mkha' ma refuge, but also inspiration for the Bodhisattva's way of life in general.[40]

Thang-stong's personal communication with Avalokiteśvara on the visionary level is stressed in our sources. B-1 attributes his first impetus to renounce worldly life to a vision he had as a youth in which the Bodhisattva spoke to him for three days, urging him to renounce Saṁsāra.[41] His principal vision of Avalokiteśvara, recounted verbatim in several of our sources,[42] is indicated to have been the inspiration for the KKM. It occurred during a seven year period of seclusion which he entered after the death of his mother. Thang-stong was living in a mountain retreat near his home, engaged in ascetic withdrawal and repetitious chanting. All of our sources state that Thang-stong had just recited "an extremely large number of maṇis" when the following ensued:

> On the morning of the eighth day of the month of miracles,[43] he saw directly in front of him an Avalokiteśvara with one face and two hands, one with four hands, one with eleven heads and eight hands, and one with 1,000 hands and 1,000 eyes. All of these (Avalokiteśvaras) were (stacked) one on top of another, and were surrounded by inconceivably many Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. (Thang-stong) offered prostrations with countless emanation bodies, and the seven-staged prayer "The Prayer of the Space Being Pervaded with Prayer Clouds of Absorption," and then made this supplication: "Compasionately consider the deteriorated sentient beings in these bad times!"
>
> The Ārya (Avalokiteśvara) said, "Since I am your spiritual mentor,[44] it is very good for you to widen the ocean of the two types of accumulation[45] for both yourself and others, by chanting the six-syllabled formula (oṁ maṇi padme hūṁ), and by using illusive food, riches, and wealth. Firmly set up ferries and precious iron bridges on all the great rivers of the Snowland (Tibet). Increase the merit of sentient beings of the deteriorated age by building repositories for the body,

> speech, and mind of the Jinas.[46] By seeing, hearing, remembering, and feeling, fill the breadth of the kingdom with the sound of the six-syllabled king of formulas which closes the door to the lower realms and shows the way to the higher states."

These visionary words indeed outline Thang-stong's life and career as it is portrayed in B-1. As a basis for the KKM sādhana however, the role of this vision seems indirect at best, as will emerge from the proceeding discussion.

The following represents the available literature on the KKM system:

KKM-1: 'Gro don mkha' khyab ma.

By Thang-stong rGyal-po.

Woodblock print. 1 folio.

Content: The core text of the KKM Avalokiteśvara sādhana. In verse.

KKM-1 has been published in numerous independent editions. One has been inserted at the end of B-1 in its present form as distributed in the P.L. 480 program. It is also included in the S-1 collection. A third edition is a block-print in this writer's possession. All of the editions of the KKM-1 that we have seen are identical, lacking any variant readings. The text is translated below, p. 111-2. It was previously translated loosely by Janice Willis, in The Diamond Light of the Eastern Dawn, pp. 69-73.

KKM-2: Grub pa'i dbang phyug thang stong rgyal po la thugs rje chen pos dngos su gnang ba'i snying po yi ge drug pa'i nyams len gyi gzhung gsal byed dang bcas pa.

a) (no title) (p. 18).

By Kun-dga' Grol-mchog.

Content: Brief instructions on the general preliminary practices (thun-mong sngon-'gro), followed by prose restatement of KKM-1 with explanation of symbolism.

Lineage (p. 21):

Mahākaruṇika (Avalokiteśvara)
Thang-stong rGyal-po
Kun-spangs-rje
Kun-dga' Grol-mchog

b) Grub pa'i dbang phyug lcags zam pa chen po'i nye brgyud yi ge drug pa'i sgom lung 'bogs tshul gzhan phan mkha' khyab (p. 21).

By Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas.

Content: Detailed commentary on KKM-2-a.

c) Grub pa'i dbang phyug thang stong rgyal po'i nye brgyud thugs rje chen po'i sgom bzlas kyi ngag 'don mdo sngags yongs bcud (p. 31).

By Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas.

Content: The same material as in KKM-2-b, but in chantable verse (ngag-'don). Incorporates KKM-1 and selections from standard Buddhist sources. Includes segments attributed to Kun-spangs-pa.

Lineage (pp. 33-34):

Avalokiteśvara
(Grub-chen) Thang-stong rGyal-po
(rDo-rje 'Dzin-pa) Kun-spangs Chos-kyi-rje
Kun-dga' Grol-mchog
bsTan-'dzin Nyi-zla bZang-po
Ngag-dbang Nyi-ma bZang-po
bsTan-'dzin bSod-nams dBang-phyug
dNgos-grub mChog-brnyes rMor-chen-rje
bSod-nams Ye-shes mChog-dpal
bsTan-'dzin Ye-shes lHun-grub
Blo-bzang bsTan-'phel
bsTan-'dzin Blo-bzang mKhyen-rab mThu-stobs
'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po
Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas

d) rJe grub thob chen po dge slong padma dkar por skye ba bzhes ba'i tshe 'phags pa spyan ras gzigs la gsol ba btab pa'i rdo rje'i gsung (p. 35).

Content: Text of the prayer of Padmakāra, said to be a former incarnation of Thang-stong rGyal-po.

Translated above, pp. 106-107.

KKM-3: Grub pa'i dbang phyug thang stong rgyal po'i nye brgyud 'phags mchog spyan ras gzigs kyi bsgom bzlas 'gro don mkha' khyab ma'i zin bris nyung bsdus 'gro don char rgyun.

By mKha'-khyab rDo-rje, the 15th Karma-pa (1871-1922).

Lithograph of manuscript from dPal-spung edition. 22 folios.

Content: Commentary to KKM-1. Includes material from other traditions of Avalokiteśvara meditation.

Translated by Ken McCloud, A Continuous Rain to Benefit Beings.

KKM-4: Grub chen thang stong rgyal po'i 'gro don mkha' khyab ma'i ma ṇi sgom bzlas.

By sMan-sdong mTshams-pa Karma Nges-don bsTan-rgyas.

Published in The Collected Works of sMan-sdong mTshams-pa Rin-po-che, vol. 3, pp. 433-484.

Content: Instructions for daily practice of the KKM system.

The KKM-1 core text consists of a versified statement describing the visualization of Avalokiteśvara. The lines are recited by the practitioner as he meditates. The text also includes a number of instructional notes, which are written in smaller face, and which are not part of the recited lines. These notes are found verbatim in all of the editions of KKM-1 that we have seen, and thus seem to be part of Thang-stong's original work. In the following translation of KKM-1, we have enclosed the verses for recitation in quotation marks.

> (The Meditation) For All Beings Throughout Space, which was transmitted directly to Thang-stong rGyal-po:
>
> First, take refuge.
>
> (Then;)

"I, etc., sentient beings pervading (all) space—
On top of our heads is a white lotus and moon.
On top of that, the syllable hrīḥ, from which (appears)
Excellent Noble Avalokiteśvara,
White, luminous, emanating light rays of five colors.
Smiling, he watches with compassionate eyes.
Of his four hands, the first two are palms together,
And the lower two hold a crystal rosary and a white lotus.
He is adorned with silks and precious ornaments,
Wears a deer skin across his chest,
Has a crown with Amitābha on it,
Sits with his two feet in the vajra position,
Leans his back against a pure moon.
He has become the essence of all refuges."

"I bow to the lord Avalokiteśvara,
Who is not covered by defect,
Whose body color is white,
Whose head is adorned by the Prefected Buddha,
And who watches beings with compassionate eyes."

Repeat (this prayer) three or seven times, or as much as possible.

"As a result of this one-pointed prayer,
Light rays emanate from the Noble One's body,
And clarify impure karmic appearances and mistaken ideas.
The external vessel becomes the Sukhāvatī realm.
The internal essence of the body, speech, and mind of living beings,
Becomes the body, speech, and mind of Avalokiteśvara.
Sights, sounds, and thoughts are empty, become undifferentiated."

While meditating on this, chant the six syllables.

Then become absorbed in one's own nature which is not conceptualizing in any of the three cycles.

Arising:
"My and other's appearance is that of the Noble One's body,
Sounds are of the rhythm of the six syllables.
Thoughts are the center of great wisdom."

"Through this merit may I quickly become Avalokiteśvara, and then establish all beings without exception onto that level."

And so forth—pray that one's merit be shared.

The KKM sādhana is divided by the commentators into three sections: preliminaries (sngon-'gro), actual practice (dngos-gzhi), and post-meditation practice (rjes).

The preliminaries begin with the taking of refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Kun-dga' Grol-mchog prescribes the recitation of bKa'-lnga-pa's Ma nam mkha' ma formula.[47] Kong-sprul states that the practitioner should visualize that his guru in the form of Avalokiteśvara, surrounded by all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, is in front of him, and that the refuge formula is directed to these visualized figures. The practitioner imagines that all sentient beings are seated near him and are repeating the refuge formula together.

mKha'-khyab rDo-rje describes the same visualization for the taking of refuge, but does not mention the Ma nam mkha' ma liturgy. Rather, he presents a verse well known in Tibetan Buddhism that is usually attributed to Atīśa. This verse also appears as the refuge formula in some of the independent editions of KKM-1. It translates:

> In the excellent Buddha, Dharma and Assembly of Followers,
> I take refuge until I am enlightened.
> May the merit resulting from my performance of the sādhana
> Cause me to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of beings.

The last two lines of this verse actually express not the taking of refuge, but rather the 'arousal of the enlightened consciousness' (bodhicittotpāda), whereby the practitioner dedicates the meditation period to the welfare of all beings. mKha'-khyab rDo-rje also includes a separate formula expressing the enlightened attitude that is standard in Tibetan sādhanas:

> For all sentient beings, I will reach the level of a completely enlightened Buddha.
> For that reason, I cultivate this sādhana of the Noble Avalokiteśvara.

Kong-sprul, remarking that the refuge and arousal of the enlightened attitude together satisfy the minimum requirements for the preliminary practice, goes on to describe additional subjects for

meditation which are also grouped under the rubric of preliminaries. These subjects are labelled 'urging the mind towards the Dharma' (blo chos-su bskul-ba), and correspond to the topics of the 'general preliminaries' (thun-mong sngon-'gro) found in the Tibetan path literature (lam-rim).[48] Kong-sprul presents three themes for contemplation:

1) Laying the basis for renounciation (nges-'byung gi gzhi-'ding): The reflection upon the universality of suffering in the Saṁsāra, and the problems of each of the six worlds of the desire-realm (kāmadhātu).

2) Urging on with the whip of effort (brtson-'grus kyi lcag skul-ba): The reflection on the particular suffering of the human world, the rarity of having all the right opportunities and fortune to be involved in spiritual cultivation, the inevitability of change and death for even the most fortunate, and the unswerving certainty that only karma follows and directs one into the next life.

3) Deciding with an enlightened attitude which is as concerned as is a shepherd[49] (phyugs-rdzi lta-pu'i sems-bskyed): The resolve that whatever one does, says, or thinks will be to help all beings.[50]

These concepts are standard in Mahāyāna Buddhism, and do not represent an innovation on the part of Thang-stong or his commentators. Kong-sprul quotes freely from classical sources such as the Udānavarga and the Bodhicaryāvatāra to substantiate his discussion.

The KKM-1 core text, after alluding briefly to the preliminary practices with the statement "First, take refuge," proceeds directly with the description of the actual practice.

The first portion of the actual practice, beginning with the

line "I, etc., sentient beings pervading space," down to the line "He has become the essence of all refuges," is labelled the 'production stage' (*bskyed-rim*, Skt. *utpannakrama*). The production stage is the process of meditatively producing a visualization of the Buddha or deity. Kun-dga' Grol-mchog states that skill in concentration (*dhyāna*) is essential in the production stage, since the image and all of its details must be "seen" clearly.[51]

Each of the elements of the production stage are discussed by the commentators. The first line, "I, etc., sentient beings...," is explained as indicating that all sentient beings of the six realms are seated around the meditator and are performing the visualization together with him.

The next image is of a lotus flower that grows out of the meditator's head, from a fontanel called *spyi-gtsug*.[52] On top of the lotus rests a flat cushion that is shaped like a full moon. This "moon-seat" is balanced above the tips of the petals of the flower. The seed-syllable (*bīja*) *hrīḥ*[53] appears on top of the moon-seat, and is transformed into Avalokiteśvara. mKha'-khyab rDo-rje provides considerable detail on the process of transformation, which may be summarized as follows: The lotus has a stamen and eight petals. The syllable *hrīḥ* on the moon-seat is white and luminous like a pearl. The meditator imagines that the *hrīḥ* is filled with the power of all Buddhas. Light radiates from the *hrīḥ*, shines on the Pure Lands in the ten directions, and makes offerings pleasing to the Buddha's body, speech, and mind. The light also touches the meditator and all beings, and eliminates mental and physical illnesses. It reaches the six realms of the Saṁsāra, eliminates suffering, and renders all blissful. The light, filled with the blessing of the Buddhas,

collects back into the hrīḥ on the head of the mediator, and instantaneously transforms itself into the figure of Avalokiteśvara.[54]

Kun-dga' Grol-mchog compares the white color of Avalokiteśvara's body to that of an autumn moon, and his luminescence to that of crystal. The clear light that Avalokiteśvara emanates is said to be perfectly stainless. mKha'-khyab rDo-rje adds that the light from Avalokiteśvara touches the Buddha-fields, urges the Buddhas to help beings, shines on beings in the six realms, and again clears away all suffering.

According to Kun-dga' Grol-mchog, Avalokiteśvara's single face indicates his pervasive compassion. His eyes are watching the six realms of Saṁsāra, and are full like the petals of the utpala flower. mKha'-khyab rDo-rje adds that Avalokiteśvara is watching the past, present, and future.

Avalokiteśvara's two hands held together at his chest are said to symbolize his reverence for the infinite Buddhas who are working for all beings. His lower right hand is telling a 108-beaded crystal rosary, and signifies uninterrupted compassion. His lower left hand holding the white lotus by its stem shows that he is not touched by the "mud" of thinking for his own benefit (the standard metaphor of the lotus as symbol of the Bodhisattva). He wears a skirt of cotton fastened by a jewelled belt. His ornaments are a symbol of the eight types of emancipation.[55] mKha'-khyab rDo-rje states that the Bodhisattva's shawl is made of white silk with golden embroidery, the skirt is red silk, and the crown is gold from the Jambu River with a border of many divine jewels. The other ornaments are earrings, neckpiece, necklaces, upper arm bracelets, wrist and foot

bracelets, and a belt made of ringing bells. The deer skin slung across the Bodhisattva's left breast signifies his great compassion for all beings.[56] According to mKha'-khyab rDo-rje, the animal is the kṛṣṇasāra antelope, of a spotted golden color. The KKM core text does not mention Avalokiteśvara's hairstyle. The information is supplied by Kun-dga' Grol-mchog who may have based his statement on the dMar-khrids, which describe the Bodhisattva's hair in a braided bun, with the remaining locks hanging freely. His feet are in the 'vajra position" (vajrāsana) which symbolizes the non-duality of compassion and emptiness. The Amitābha figure on the crown indicates Amitābha's position as the master of Avalokiteśvara's Buddha family. The stainless moon backrest is said to symbolize the cool rays of compassion emanating from the Bodhisattva which subdue the hot pain of attachment.

The final statement of the production stage, "He has become the essence of all refuges," indicates that Avalokiteśvara should be visualized as embodying the essence of all chosen deities (yi-dam), Buddhas, and Bodhisattvas, who comprise the "suitable" objects of refuge in Buddhism.[59] As will be noted below, this statement summarizes a meditative ritual which is included in the more complex sādhana traditions, whereby the 'visualized image" (samayasattva) is consecrated and imbued with the spirit of the 'actual wisdom being' (jñānasattva).[58]

The Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara having been established on the meditator's head, the production stage concludes. The next lines are a prayer to the Bodhisattva that has been borrowed from the earlier

tradition.[59] That it is not the composition of Thang-stong is indicated by the fact that Kun-dga' Grol-mchog reproduces these lines verbatim, whereas he restates and explains the rest of the sādhana in prose. We may assume that Kun-dga' Grol-mchog's readers were already familiar with the verse and its explanation.

The commentators also add other prayers and songs to be recited at this point. Kong-sprul includes the prayer of Padmakāra translated above. mKha'-khyab rdo-rje suggests the recitation of such classical Avalokiteśvara liturgies as the Po-bstod by Bhikṣunī Śrī,[60] and the sMre-ngag by Zla-rgyal.[61] These verses of supplication are said to move the heart (thugs-rgyud bskul-pa) of the Bodhisattva, and to urge him to grant his blessings and empowerments.

The final section of the actual practice involves the imagined receipt of the blessings requested by the supplicative verse, and the recitation of the mantra. Kong-sprul, following Kun-dga' Grol-mchog, explains the progression as follows:

> As a result of these entreaties, the body of the Noble One on our head emits infinite light. This light touches the whole universe and all contained, and purifies all impure karmic appearances.[62] The external vessel, which is the world, becomes a crystal palace. As for the internal elements, which are the sentient beings, their bodies are transformed into the body (of Avalokiteśvara) in which appearance and emptiness (snang-stong) are indistinguishable. Their voices are transformed into the very sound of the six syllables, in which sound and emptiness (grags-stong) are indistinguishable. Their minds are the play of wisdom, in which thought and emptiness[63] (rig-stong) are indistinguishable. Thus one should chant the six syllables while one-pointedly remaining in the expanded state of the Filling the Sky Absorption, which is the transformation of the three maṇḍalas of appearance, sound, and thought.[64]

Avalokiteśvara's blessing is transmitted in the form of light, a motif common in Buddhism.[65] In this case the light is considered to

have the power to transform everything it touches into its ideal aspect, making all appear as it would if perceived by Avalokiteśvara. This section of the visualization is labelled 'situation transformation' (gnas-'gyur). Kong-sprul also calls it the 'Filling the Sky Absorption' (mkha'-khyab ting-nge-'dzin) echoing the wording of the KKM title. The term 'filling the sky' refers to the sphere of the visualization, which has now shifted from the specific figure of the Bodhisattva to the entire universe. This shift has been effected by the light emanating from Avalokiteśvara's body. The light is imagined to clarify the perception of the meditator, so that he may view the world as the Sukhāvatī Pure Land.

In KKM-2-c, Kong-sprul includes a further visualization to be performed while chanting the mantra, which is absent in the KKM core text, and is attributed to an oral tradition originating with Kun-spangs Yab-sras.[66] In both context and meter these extra verses follow the KKM core text. They are to be added directly after the line "Sights, sounds...." As the KKM core text concludes with the Bodhisattva still sitting on the meditator's head, this addition functions to resolve the visualization by removing the Avalokiteśvara image. The verses translate:

> The Protector on our heads dissolves into light
> Which is absorbed into oneself and the others.
> In our heart centers there is a white six-petalled lotus,
> On top of which is the syllable hrīḥ,
> Surrounded by the six syllables which face inwards and orbit clockwise,
> From which light emanates, purifies the sins and defilements of all beings,
> And causes the two types of enlightened attitude to arise in their minds.
> Then the light returns and one's own mind is blessed.[67]

Visualizing thusly, the practitioner recites oṁ maṇi padme hūṁ.

The mantra itself does not appear in KKM-1, but the notes in smaller type state that the meditator should "chant the six syllables," which clearly refers to this mantra. Kong-sprul adds here that this recitation is the basis of the entire KKM practice.

As for the meaning of the mantra, there have been numerous interpretations in Tibetan Buddhist literature. mKha'-khyab rDo-rje, stating that "the six syllables contain the concentration of all the energy of Avalokiteśvara's compassion," goes on to explain the significance of each syllable. His information does not specifically relate to a tradition stemming from Thang-stong rGyal-po, and thus will not be reproduced here. We may note, however, that the syllables of the mantra are linked to a general maṇḍala-like scheme similar to that found in much of tantric literature. mKha'-khyab rDo-rje superimposes a six-fold structure onto the classically five-fold maṇḍala, by splitting 'Og-min and sTug-po bKod-pa'i Zhing into two separate heavens[69] and ignorance (avidyā) and stupor (moha) into two separate obscurations, in order to conform to the structure imposed by the six syllables of the mantra. Other aspects of his scheme, for example the correspondence of the six syllables to six colors and the six worlds of the Realm of Desire (kāmaloka), are standard.[70]

mKha'-khyab rDo-rje also offers a literal explanation of the mantra which should be noted: "The letter oṃ contains the wisdom of the five bodies; maṇi means 'jewel;' padma means 'having a lotus,' 'Having Jewel and Lotus' being a name of Avalokiteśvara; and hūṃ has the function of protecting all beings in the six realms. Thus the meaning is 'O master of the five bodies and five wisdoms, Holder of the Jewel and Lotus, please protect the six types of beings from

suffering!'"[71] A similar interpretation was presented in the West as early as the beginning of this century, when F. W. Thomas and A. H. Francke contradicted W. W. Rockhill's rendering "Hail to the Jewel in the Lotus."[72] The latter has nevertheless remained the popular interpretation. If we follow mKha'-khyab rDo-rje and Thomas's view, _maṇipadma_ would be a copulative _bahuvrīhi_,[73] and the -e ending a vocative.[74]

At the end of the period of recitation (_thun-thar_), the meditator is instructed to experience the 'completion stage' (_rdzogs-rim_, Skt. _saṃpannakrama_). The completion stage is the final section of the actual practice. In general it is found only in the higher tantras, and some have claimed that it is unique to the Anuttara. The completion stage is said to be the logical conclusion of visualization meditation in Buddhism, in that it circumvents the criticism of theism or materialsim, i.e. the positing of a substantial reality of the visualized image. The completion stage consists of the dissolution of the image back into the emptiness from which it was produced. The explanation is that the meditator's mind has been transformed into the mind of the visualized Bodhisattva during the production stage. As a result, the meditator can see the relativity of all things, including the relativity of the visualization itself. After realizing the insubstantiality even of the Buddha or Bodhisattva, the practitioner enters a state of profound awareness lacking any conceptualization. An illustrative metaphor often repeated in completion stage instructions is that of looking at reality "directly in the face," or, looking directly at the "primordial face" of the deity.

The KKM-1 verses contain no reference to the completion

stage, nor do they make any statement that would suggest it. However the notes to the text, which as explained above seem to be part of the original core, make this statement: "Then become absorbed in one's own nature which is without conceptualization in any of the three cycles." An indication of the antiquity of this statement is the fact that it is commented upon as early as KKM-2-a, where Kun-dga' Grol-mchog states,

> Look directly at the dharma-ness (dharmatā) of the god Mahākaruṇika (Avalokiteśvara) who is one's own nature, the essence of enlightenment. Without intellectual explanations leading to mental construction, bliss, or experiences, completely cut off the causal path of dualistic clinging, and remain absorbed as long as possible by abandoning yourself into the state of great self-liberation.[75]

Kong-sprul expands on this statement in KKM-2-b:

> After completing the sādhana: In a state lacking sight and seeing, directly see with your primordial (gnyug-ma) mind the essence of own-mind, which is clear voidness; intellect; the meaning of dharma-ness; Mahākaruṇika; the triple body; self-made from the beginning; pervading all situations of basis, path, and result; and the own-face of the essence of enlightenment. Separate yourself from mental investigations which make, construct, obstruct, or complete. Don't be attached to a style of clinging to experiences such as the non-conceptual blissful clarity, et cetera. Completely cut off the causal path of discursive conceptualizing which clings to duality. And although a spreading or collecting of concepts may occur, send them into the state of primordial dharma-ness that is self-liberation, and remain absorbed as long as you can in the natural state which lacks extremes.[76]

In the liturgy of KKM-2-c, Kong-sprul presents the following additional verses for the completion stage.[77] These verses are said to represent the basic contemplation (rtsa-ba'i dgongs-pa) of the KKM system:[78]

> No meditation, nor is there a meditator,
> No god, nor is there a mantra.[79]
> In this, there is nothing to be revealed whatsoever.
> There is not even a little something to prove.
> Perfectly observe perfection itself.

> When one sees perfection, one is completely liberated.[80]
> Since whatever arises is primordiality itself,
> If one is aware of whatever appears and leaves it alone,
> That appearance is emptiness, in which consists
> The king of yogas, without a doubt.[81]

These lines were culled from canonical sources. Thus is the goal or final realization of the KKM stated in terms known to much of Buddhism.

The actual practice ends after the completion stage. The final section is the 'post-meditation' (rjes). The practitioner arises from the meditation posture and resumes his daily activity. He views all aspects of body, speech, and mind as they would be in the Pure Land of Avalokiteśvara. This practice is known as the Three Carry-overs (khyer-so gsum) in Vajrayāna,[82] wherein the body, speech, and mind of the Buddha or deity envisioned during the sādhana are "carried over" into mundane experience.

In the KKM core text, the Carry-over practice is described by the three lines beginning "My and other's appearance...." Kun-dga' Grol-mchog comments on these lines by stating, "During breaks from meditation (thun-mtshams), one's compassion-developed body, speech, and mind strive towards performing meritorious activity."[83] Kong-sprul explains the KKM Carry-over practice thusly:

> When wishing to get up out of that absorption, imagine your body to be without own-nature, and to look like the Noble Avalokiteśvara. Do not, through desire, hatred, or stupidity, reject or accept any beings, enemies, or friends, who can all be subsumed under the category of mother. Decide that all material forms[84] are like the body of the Noble One. All voices and sounds[85] are actually the sound of the six syllables. Whatever thoughts, good or bad, appear, they are the great wisdom. Don't experience the taste of any conceptualization, but just leave the nature of whatever appears as it is, and you will have the yoga of the Three Carry-overs. Having completely developed an indiscriminate friendliess and

> compassion for beings, who are our mothers and fathers, and who hold delusion as real, one should throw off attachment to reality, and through illusion use one's body, speech, and mind to try to perform as much merit as possible.[86]

It should be noted that the Three Carry-overs are considered to be a type of absorption (samādhi), the type that is performed while walking, sitting, sleeping, and speaking.[87] It consists in the avoidance of mental attachment or conceptualization, and the cultivation of the compassion of a Bodhisattva, while performing daily activities.

At the conclusion of the KKM, the practitioner shares the merit accrued through the performance of the meditation with all beings. The lines expressing this notion in KKM-1 are again standard in Tibetan Buddhism, and not the composition of Thang-stong.

As to the motive for sharing merit, Kong-sprul states, "The superior person who is pure in the three areas (trimaṇḍala pariśuddha = body, speech, and mind), the middling person who has an understanding of non-reality and illusion, and the lowest person with an idea to learn (the way of) the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, will all just naturally share (any merit) for the benefit of sentient beings."[88]

In terms of the variety of factors of general Buddhist origin that are operating in the KKM, its content as outlined above could be analysed in much depth. Although this is not the intention here, it might generally be remarked that there is a strong dependency of the sādhana as a whole upon the imagery of the Mahāyāna sūtras. The descriptions of meditative absorption, the shining of purifying light rays, the Sukhāvatī Pure Land practice, the ethics of the Bodhisattva path, and the Mādhyamika concept of the relativity of form and

emptiness were adopted out of the standard repertoire of Mahāyāna Buddhism. These themes might well be examined in depth in order to trace the general development of the Vajrayāna sādhanas.

The immediate sources of the elements in the KKM sādhana are to be found by examining the Avalokiteśvara traditions that were current during Thang-stong's period. Out of the many systems connected to the Bodhisattva, the KKM is most directly based on the dMar-khrids for the four-armed Avalokiteśvara listed above. As these traditions are quite similar in content, they may for this purpose be considered as a single system.

The dMar-khrids' sādhanas of Avalokiteśvara generally are more detailed than the KKM, requiring the visualization of the deities Maṇidhara and Ṣaḍakṣarī as Avalokiteśvara's attendants, etc., but much of the content is closely related to the KKM. In particular, the KKM's description of Avalokiteśvara in the production stage often employs identical phrasing to that of the dMar-khrids.[89] There are some differences; the sKyer-sgang dMar-khrid portrays the Bodhisattva as holding a rosary of pearl beads instead of crystal,[90] and some of the systems describe the color of Avalokiteśvara's body as pinkish-white instead of pure white[91] as in the KKM, but the mode of description of the Bodhisattva is otherwise the same. Thus the first conclusion that may be drawn is that Thang-stong's visual image of Avalokiteśvara is not unique, but is rather an assimilated image from the established iconography.

Further, some of the liturgical elements of the KKM have been borrowed directly from these older traditions. As we have already noticed, the four line supplication beginning "I bow to the lord

Avalokiteśvara..." is not the original composition of Thang-stong, but is in fact found verbatim in several of the dMar-khrids.[92] In addition, the refuge prayer and the final sharing-of-merit prayer usually attached to the KKM core text are standard in Tibetan Buddhism.

With regard to the structure and format of the meditative system however, we find some significant modifications. In order to explain the types of changes the KKM introduced, we might review the general nature of the structural sections of a Vajrayāna sādhana. The broad outline of preliminaries, actual practice, and post-meditation allows much variation. As a whole, preliminaries include the taking of refuge and the arousal of the enlightened attitude, but may also consist of other purifactory meditations as well as ritualized initiations. The actual practice covers the visualization of the deity in the production stage, and the resulting realizations of the completion stage. The complexity of the production stage can vary widely; the completion stage may be totally absent in the most rudimentary meditations, and on the other hand may prescribe detailed yogic exercises for the meditations of the higher tantras. Finally, the post-meditative practices vary to the degree to which the visualization is to be assimilated in the daily life and experience of the meditator.

The KKM's treatment of these categories contains extensive simplifications, and in a few cases omissions, of the corresponding sections of the dMar-khrids. Firstly, the dMar-khrid's preliminaries are considerably more complex than those of the KKM. The dMar-khrids require the visualization of the guru, and the recitation of the hundred-syllabled Vajrasattva mantra as preliminary practices.[93] Further, the Tshem-bu dMar-khrid states that an Anuttara initiation

rite is necessary, and this requirement may hold for the other dMar-khrids as well.[94] Initiation is stipulated due to the meditations on the psychic nerve channels in the dMar-khrids' completion stage, a practice belonging to the Anuttara system which always requires ritual consecration as a preliminary.

There are also differences in the structure of the actual practice, which indicate the far less esoteric status of the KKM. The dMar-khrid's production stage begins with the state of emptiness, from which the seed syllable appears. The KKM begins with the visualization of all sentient beings upon whose heads appears the seed syllable. In the dMar-khrids the seed syllable turns into the Bodhisattva as the meditator himself. In the KKM the Bodhisattva appears in the localized space on the meditator's head only.

This departure from the dMar-khrid system represents a major simplification. In general, Vajrayāna Buddhism distinguishes the 'as-self' (bgad-bskyed) visualization from the production of the Buddha image 'in-front' (bdun-bskyed) of the practitioner.[95] The visualization of the image on top of the practitioner's head, as in the KKM, is considered to be a sub-category of the in-front mode.[96] The as-self visualization, in that it involves an intimate and complete identification with the Buddha image, is affiliated to the higher tantra. The in-front mode is classifed with the lower tantras.[97] That the KKM prescribes the in-front visualization is another factor which accounts for the waiving of the initiation requirement.

A difference of similar nature can be observed with regard to the KKM's conclusion of the production stage. The KKM states "He has become the essence of all refuges." This is followed by the prayer

that moves Avalokiteśvara to grant his blessing in the form of purifying light rays. In the corresponding section of the dMar-khrids, the 'actual wisdom being' (jñānasattva) of Avalokiteśvara is invited to enter the meditator's 'visualized image' (samayasattva).[98] Elaborate mentally-created offerings move special initiating deities to consecrate the visualization, thereby enlightening the meditator andmaking him into the "real" Avalokiteśvara. The syllables oṁ, āḥ, and hūṁ become manifest in his psycho-physical centers (cakra) and Amitābha appears on his crown. In the KKM, however, there is only a shining of light rays from Avalokiteśvara's body to transform the world as a whole. There is no mention of the meditator's individual transformation nor of the consecration of his visualized image.

The completion stage of the KKM is also abbreviated. There is but a single statement on this stage in the core text. The dMar-khrids, on the other hand, present detailed yogic instructions here, including the practice of 'transference of consciousness' ('pho-ba) to the Sukhāvatī Pure Land. This section is entirely omitted in the KKM, although some modern commentators have endeavored to add it to the sādhana.[99]

The post-meditation in the dMar-khrids is the Three Carry-overs (khyer-so gsum) practice that is part of the Anuttara tantric system. In contrast, the post-meditation of the lower tantras usually involves the visualization of a small image of the Buddha which remains in the practitioner's heart center while he performs his mundane activities. Here we find that the KKM retains the more esoteric practice. The KKM's instructions to visualize all form, sound, and thoguht as that of Avalokiteśvara corresponds to the dMar-khrid

practice. The practitioner of the KKM becomes Avalokiteśvara in his daily life. This has led some commentators to connect the KKM to the Anuttara tantras, despite its simplification of the other elements of the sādhana.[100]

The foregoing establishes the derivative nature of the simplified KKM in dependence upon the dMar-khrid systems. That we are specifically told, in his biographies and elsewhere, that Thang-stong studied the dMar-khrids on several occasions provides a further basis for this conclusion.

This utilization of the existing tradition makes us question the nature of the visionary inspiration claimed as the origin of the KKM. We have seen that the content of the KKM does not reflect the content of Thang-stong's vision of Avalokiteśvara. Whereas the vision involved a number of iconographical forms of the Bodhisattva, the KKM concerns only one form. Further, the vision consisted of Avalokiteśvara making prophecies concerning Thang-stong's career, but the KKM is a sādhana, a soteriologically oriented meditation, and of no specific relevance to Thang-stong's personal life. The divergence of the KKM from the vision is also noted by Kong-sprul, who states that the sādhana is based on all of Thang-stong's visions of the Bodhisattva, and is a summary of his revelatory experience as a whole.[101] Thus we find that the KKM is not a visionary document, despite the fact that it is traditionally regarded as a 'direct transmission,' and is defined as a visionary core text and an ancient writing (<u>rtsa-ba'i yig-rnying</u>).[102]

We suggest instead that what is considered to be Thang-stong's visionary inspiration by the tradition consisted of his life-long interest in the Bodhisattva's cult. It will be remembered that B-1 stresses Thang-stong's vow to spread Avalokiteśvara's mantra throughout Tibet. This intention seems to have been the crucial factor in the formulation of the KKM.

Today, the wide distribution and popularity of the KKM suggests that Thang-stong achieved some success in carrying out his vow. Tibetan teachers from a variety of areas and sects currently prescribe the KKM as an introduction for novices. Propagators of the KKM include the present Karma-pa, the Shangs-pa teacher Ka-lu Rinpoche, Kun-dga' Thar-rtse Rinpoche of the Sa-skya Ngor Monastery in Western Tibet, and sDe-gzhung Rinpoche of Thar-lam Monastery in Eastern Tibet.

The success of the KKM is accounted for by a number of factors which can be identified as a deliberate effort on Thang-stong's part to make the sādhana accessible to a wide audience. The most obvious innovation of the KKM is the fact that the entire text is only one folio long. The condensation of the Avalokiteśvara meditative tradition into such a concise form is a considerable achievement. The Tibetan Buddhist practitioner has numerous meditations and rituals that he is obliged to perform daily. This is responsible for the increasing tendency to substitute abbreviated (<u>'dus-pa</u>) versions of a meditative system for the extended (<u>rgyas-pa</u>) recensions. That the KKM is so short and yet does not sacrifice the essential elements is one of the major reasons for its survival in a veritable sea of Avalokiteśvara sādhanas in Tibet.

The KKM's versification provides a further clue to its success.

The dMar-khrids are uniformly written in a rather dry and rambling prose. The aesthetically pleasing rhythm of the KKM's regular seven syllabled metre is a significant innovation. Moreover, verse is generally more easily memorized than prose. In Tibet the literacy rate was low outside the monastic centers, and printed material was scarce. Memorizability was a crucial factor which could break the tie to literacy, institutions, and ritualized transmission. In addition, the versified statement is more suitable for recitation than prose, and thus more easily adapted for the chanted liturgies that were popular in Tibet.

A final advantage of the KKM is the fact that the requirement for ritualized initiation is omitted. The elimination of this time-consuming and costly ceremony must have made students more apt to request the teaching. The lack of initiation also means that the vows and commitments that are associated with the ritual are avoided.

In the last analysis we find the KKM to represent a midpoint between the classical and creative Tibetan Avalokiteśvara meditations. Thang-stong's assimilation and simplification of the older systems correspond to what is considered to be visionary inspiration by the tradition. By combining the canonical elements with an innovative simplicity, Thang-stong was able to make a viable contribution to the Avalokiteśvara teachings in Tibet.

The KKM is seen by Tibetans as a system of meditation devised by a teacher with a full realization of Avalokiteśvara, written in simple but profound terms for the sake of his students. We have found that although the KKM is categorized as a visionary text, there

was much borrowing from the other traditions. In the Tibetan parlance, it can be said that elements of the Avalokiteśvara successive transmission must be recognized in the KKM. But this identification of non-visionary elements in the KKM has already been hinted at by the KKM's commentators and has little effect on the high regard in which the sādhana is held. Although there were more novel and synthetic approaches to meditation on Avalokiteśvara in Tibet, novelty in Buddhism is not considered to be a measure of spiritual value. Borrowing is of little significance in the visionary world view, where originality is always subservient to the possession of authentic lineage. That authentic and direct communication with Avalokiteśvara was attributed to Thang-stong is the primary reason for the KKM's success in Tibetan Buddhism.

The following work, though not specifically mentioning the KKM, cites the same vision that is recounted in the KKM commentaries, and prescribes the visualization of the forms of Avalokiteśvara that appeared in that vision. The subject of the text is the manufacture of "spiritual medicine."

KKM-5: Grub chen thang rgyal lugs kyi thugs rje chen po'i maṇi ril sgrub gshan phan kun khyab.

By Blo-gter dBang-po.

Published in sGrub thabs kun btus, vol. Tha, pp. 590-603.

Content: Visualization of the two-armed Avalokiteśvara as-self, with a four-armed Avalokiteśvara in the heart, an eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara at the throat, and a thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara at the crown. This is followed by the visualization of the vessel (bum-pa) containing the nectar of enlightenment, and instructions for the making of pills (ril-bu). Recounts the KKM vision of Avalokiteśvara (pp. 601-602).

The following works are not connected to the KKM, but may be

listed in regard to the Thang-stong Avalokiteśvara tradition:

A-1: (no title).

Published in Rin chen gter mdzod, vol. 37, pp. 1-19.

a) Thugs rje chen po yi ge drug pa'i gsol 'debs (p. 1).

By 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po.

Content: A Pure Vision by 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po of mNga'-ris Tshul-khrims bZang-po, said to be an incarnation of Thang-stong.[103] Includes a versified sādhana of Avalokiteśvara, and the prayer of Padmakāra (= KKM-2-d).

b) Thugs rje chen po yi ge drug pa'i gsol 'debs sgrub thabs dang 'brel pa'i rig gtad chog mchog dman snying gi bdud rtsi (p. 19).

By Padma Gar-dbang Blo-gros mTha'-yas, according to instruction of 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po.

Content: Initiation which 'directs awareness' (rig-gtad), for A-1-a.

A-2: Jo bo thugs rje chen po yi ge drug pa'i gsol 'debs sgrub thabs kyi khrid yig dri med 'od snang.

By Ngag-dbang bsTan-'dzin Nor-bu (1867-1940).

Woodblock print. 56 folios.

Content: Commentary to A-1-a. Includes a general history of the Avalokiteśvara teachings in Tibet.

The reader is further referred to the Grub thob thugs tig discussed below, of which text GT-I-1-c describes a sādhana of Avalokiteśvara traced to Thang-stong. That system is unrelated to the KKM, and is akin rather to the Discovered Treasure tradition.

Notes

1. Translates literally "Space Filled for the Benefit of Beings," but the intention of the title seems to be that the meditation is directed towards the beings who are as numerous as infinite space is large. A rendering such as "For All Beings Throughout Space" is probably closer to the title's meaning.

2. See Heinrik Kern and Bunyio Nanjio, ed., Saddharmapuṇḍarīka, pp. 362-374. Avalokiteśvara appears in chapter 24 which, however, is considered to be a later addition to the sūtra.

3. P. L. Vaidya, ed., Avalokiteśvaraguṇa-Karaṇḍavyūha. See Constantin Regamy, "Motifs Vichnoutes et Sivaites dans le Karaṇḍavyūha." The major statements about Avalokiteśvara in the sūtra summarized by Har Dayal, The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature, pp. 48-49.

4. F. Max Mueller and Bunyio Nanjio, ed., Sukhāvatīvyūha.

5. In this sūtra, Avalokiteśvara, inspired by the Buddha, preaches the Prajñāpāramitā doctrine. See Edward Conze, trans., "Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya."

6. To. 681. See also Bo-dong Pan-chen, gSung-'bum, vol. 23 which treats this and other tantras of the Kriyā tantra class. The Kulakonāthapañcadaśaka (To. 436) also seems to be important for the Avalokiteśvara cult.

7. For an overview of the history of the Avalokiteśvara image, see Marie Therese de Mallman, Introduction a L'etude d'Avalokiteśvara, p. 105 seq.; also, Dietrich Seckel, The Art of Buddhism.

8. Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, The Indian Buddhist Iconography, p. 349 seq., shows the 108 forms of Avalokiteśvara in the Machhandar Vahal Temple in Kathmandu.

9. Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, ed., Sādhanamāla, vol. II, p. cl. See also Antoinette Gordon, Iconography of Tibetan Lamaism, p. 64; and Jacques von Goldsenhover, Art Lamaique Art Des Dieux, p. 63 seq.

10. Studied by Ariane Macdonald, "Rapports sur les conférences de l'année scolaire 1967-1968, Histoire et philologie tibétaines," pp. 527-533; Matthew Kapstein, "Remarks on the Maṇi bKa'-'bum and the cult of Avalokiteśvara in Tibet." That the Avalokiteśvara cult was widespread only after the 11th century has been advanced by Ariane Macdonald, "Une Lecture des Pelliot tibétain 1286, 1287, 1047 et 1290: essai sur la formation et l'emploi des mythes politiques dans la religion royale de Sron-bcan sgam-po"; and Yoshiro Imaeda, "Note Preliminaire sur la formule Oṃ Maṇi Padme Hūṃ dans les Manuscrits Tibétaines de Touen-Houang."

11. See R. A. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, p. 28 seq.; 40.

12. Ibid, p. 51.

13. See note 6 above.

14. E.g., To. 1750 and 1751.

15. Atīśa's sādhanas in Tāranātha, sGrub thabs rin chen 'byung gnas, vol. 1, p. 241 seq.

16. See p. 53 above, n. 28.

17. See To. 2751, 2752, 2757, 2796.

18. To. 2748. See also Cittaviśrāmaṇa Avalokiteśvara in Tāranātha, sGrub thabs rin chen 'byung gnas, vol. 1, p. 270 seq.

19. Her sādhana for the 11 headed Avalokiteśvara is To. 2737. See also To. 1172. She is also called Bhikṣunī Śrī. Possible identification with Lakṣmiṅkāra, the sister of Indrabhūti. See George Roerich, Blue Annals, vol. I, p. 390; and Alaka Chattopadhyaya, Catalogue of Kanjur and Tanjur, vol. 1, p. 28, author entry for Avalokiteśvarastotra.

20. See To. 2729, 2738, 2739, 2740. An Aṣṭabhayatrāṇa and a Po-stod (?) are often mentioned in the Avalokiteśvara literature, but neither of these texts seem to be listed in the catalogues of the bsTan-'gyur.

21. A precursor of Tāranātha's work is the sNar thang brgya rtsa collection compiled by mChims Nam-mkha'-grags (13th century), whose work contains several Avalokiteśvara meditations, including versions of the meditation on the four-armed Avalokiteśvara stemming from the teacher Zhang-ston and the mChims lineage. A later collection of sādhanas is bsTan-pa'i Nyi-ma Phyogs-las rNam-rgyal (Fourth Panchen Lama), sGrub thabs rin 'byung nas gsungs pa'i lha tshogs rnams kyi sgrub thabs kyi rim pa phyogs gcig tu bkod pa don gsal, which is based directly on Tāranātha's work. See also (Cing Su-jug-thu) Blo-bzang Nor-bu Shes-rab, Yi dam rgya mtsho'i sgrub thabs rin chen byung gnas kyi lhan thabs gsal ba'i me long.

22. Roerich, Blue Annals, p. 1006 seq., identifies the Tshem-bu method and the Zla-rgyal method as dMar-khrids, and discusses the Bhikṣunī Śrī traditions and the King's method in depth without labelling them as dMar-khrid.

23. Kun-dga' Grol-mchog, Jo nang zab khrid brgya rtsa brgyad (herein abbreviated Khrid-brgya) describes 108 sādhana traditions, of both Indian and Tibetan origin, which were current in the 16th century. This work is an important source for the development of Tibetan Buddhism. The author mentions antecedent collections, such as those of lHa-rje dGe-'bum and Chos-rje Shes-'bum, which are some of the earliest Tibetan sādhana collections. Of the 108 systems in the Khrid-brgya, #30 is

the Tshem-bu dMar-khrid, #31 is the Bhikṣuṇī Śrī dMar-khrid, #32 is the Zla-rgyal dMar-khrid, #33 is the sKyer-sgang dMar-khrid, #106 is the King's instructions on Avalokiteśvara, #16 is the bKa'-'dams method, and #8 is the Cittaviśrāmaṇa teaching.

24. Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas, Thugs rje chen po'i bla ma brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs lam rim smon lam dang bcas pa byin rlabs mchog stsol.

25. See Kapstein, "Remarks on the Maṇi bKa'-'bum," p. 10.

26. Roerich, Blue Annals, p. 1008. See also p. 472 concerning his ordination of sGam-po-pa's student Chos-kyi dNgos-grub, and p. 561 concerning his connection to Phag-mo Gru-pa.

27. Kong-sprul, Thugs rje chen po'i..., p. 547. In Roerich, Blue Annals, p. 1044, he is referred to as Pyi-bo Lhas-pa Byang-chub 'Od.

28. His biography in Shangs pa gser phreng, pp. 223-295.

29. See Sa skya bka' 'bum, vol. 7, p. 137 seq.

30. In Collected Works of Karma Chag-med, vol. 2, pp. 1-453.

31. B-1, p. 177 seq.

32. Alternately, Padma dKar-po, as in KKM-2-d, p. 35, and A-1-a, p. 6. Padmakāra has been adopted here because of its use in the oldest source, which is B-1 (p. 179).

33. See KKM-2-d, KKM-4, and A-1-a.

34. See passage from B-1, p. 109, translated p. 40 above.

35. B-1, p. 18.

36. B-1, p. 44.

37. B-1, p. 121. This Karmapa was responsible for incorporating the Yang gsang bla med and the Sems nyid ngal gso Avalokiteśvara systems into the Karma bKa'-brgyud tradition. See historical account in Karma Chags-med, Thugs rje chen po'i dmar khrid phyag rdzogs zung 'jug gi skor.

38. B-1, p. 245.

39. B-1, p. 38.

40. See p. 53 above, n. 18. In his late seventies Thang-stong returned to meet this teacher again. See B-1, p. 187. Thang-stong evidently gave a liturgy for visualizing Avalokiteśvara at this time, which constitutes the only mention of an Avalokiteśvara meditation taught by Thang-stong in B-1.

41. B-1, pp. 15-16.

42. B-1, p. 70 and KKM-5, pp. 601-2. Restated in briefer form in KKM-2-b, pp. 22-23.

43. Cho-'phrul zla-ba, the first month of the Tibetan year, = February-March. Also called the Horse Month.

44. This first phrase missing in KKM-5, but is supplied by B-1, p. 70.

45. The merit (puṇya) and wisdom (jñāna) accumulations (saṁbhāra).

46. The idea is that sentient beings can accumulate great merit by worshipping such repositories.

47. See p. 33 above.

48. See Herbert Guenther, Jewel Ornament of Liberation, chapters 2-7. (Translation of sGam-po-pa's Thar pa rin po che'i rgyan.)

49. Refers to the constantly watchful state of mind that a shepherd must maintain, in which selfish thoughts are neglected and the care of the animals is the foremost concern.

50. Summarized from KKM-2-b, pp. 24-27.

51. KKM-2-a, p. 20. "bsam gtan gyi spyod lam dag dang 'brel bas bskyed rim legs pa gsal btab..."

52. Difficult to identify in Western medical terminology. Traditionally indicated to be the location where the "soft spot" on the skull of a baby had been.

53. The seed syllable associated with both Avalokiteśvara and Amitābha. See p. 153 seq., below for its role in the 'Chi med dpal ster sādhana.

54. KKM-3, p. 9 seq.

55. Mahāvyutpatti, 1510.

56. The deer commonly used as a symbol of compassion in Buddhism. Another relevant factor here may be the shamanic habit of wearing animal skins to obtain certain types of power. See Mircea Eliade, Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy, p. 152 seq.

57. Although Buddhism does not allow for a real essence (svabhāva) as such, the intention here is that the meditator sees the Bodhisattva as having the nature of all enlightened members of the Buddhist pantheon, condensed into one. See pp. 127-128 below.

58. Briefly, the visualized image refers to the practitioner who "wishes to become" the deity. When the visualization is stable, the actual wisdom being is invoked through an initiation granted by special deities visualized for this purpose. When the visualized body of the practitioner becomes imbued with the wisdom of the deity, he becomes the real deity himself (= the actual wisdom being), and not just a visualized image. The duality between the visualizer and the visualized is thereby eliminated. See Ferdinand Lessing and Alex Wayman, Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems, p . 162, n. 17.

59. According to sDe-gzhung Rinpoche, personal communication, 1979, these lines are attributed to Atīśa. See also note 92 below.

60. ? - see note 20 above.

61. To. 2732 by Candragomin or 2733 by Candrakīrti.

62. mKha'-khyab rDo-rje specifies that the ten unwholesome deeds (daśa-kuśalakarmāṇi), the emotional obscurations (kleśa), the obscurations (āvaraṇa), and broken vows are here imagined to have been transformed into their positive counterparts.

63. KKM-2-a substitutes the term gsal-stong ('clarity and emptiness') here.

64. KKM-2-b, pp. 28-29.

65. The light ray blessing has numerous precedents in Buddhism. See Lewis Lancaster, "Samādhi Names in Buddhist Texts," p. 198 for a discussion of the role of light in the Buddhist absorptions, especially the spreading of light rays to the "three thousand great thousand worlds."

66. It is unclear whether Kun-spangs Yab-sras ('Kun-spangs, Father and Son') refers to one or two persons. We know only of one Kun-spangs who was the student of Thang-stong. This is Kun-spangs rDo-ring, whose personal name is usually given as Chos-kyi Nyi-ma. His biography according to the Zhwa-lu tradition in Blo-gsal bsTan-skyong, The History of the Monastery of Zhwa-lu, pp. 264-268, in which his full name is rDo-ring-pa Kun-spangs Chos-rje Kun-bzang Chos-kyi Nyi-ma Blo-ldan Shes-rab Kun-dga' rGyal-mtshan. He is also listed in the Sa-skya lineage: see bCo-brgyad Khri-can Rinpoche, ed., Liturgical Texts of the Lam 'bras tradition for use in the new Lumbini Monastery, p. 3. His birth date given as 1524 by Sum-pa mKhan-po, dPag bsam ljon bzang, p. 56. However, some of the lineages of Thang-stong indicate that rDo-ring-pa and Chos-kyi Nyi-ma are two individuals. Se V-1, p. 303. There is also the possibility that the sras refers to Kun-dga' Grol-mchog, who is usually listed after rDo-ring-pa in the Thang-stong lineages.

67. KKM-2-c, p. 34; "spyi bo'i 'gro mgon 'od du zhu/ rang gzhan la thim thugs ka ru/ pad dkar 'dab drug lte bar hrīḥ/ yig drug nang bstan gyas bskor las/ 'od 'phros 'gro kun sdig sgrib sbyangs/ byang chub sems gnyis

rgyud la skyes/ slar 'dus bdag rgyud byin brlabs gyur//" The two types of enlightened attitude are: the wish to have an enlightened attitude (smon-pa'i byang-sems); and the actual inception of the enlightened attitude ('jug-pa'i byang-sems).

68. KKM-3, p. 23 seq.

69. 'Og-min (Akaniṣṭha) and sTug-po bKod-pa'i Shing (Ghanavyūha) usually refer to the same paradise.

70. For example Vajradhara is often separated out as a sixth Buddha, although the five Buddha scheme is more common. For further analysis of the symbolic meaning of the syllables of the mantra see Detlef Ingo Lauf, Secret Doctrines of the Tibetan Books of the Dead, p. 71; 118 seq.

71. KKM-3, p. 34.

72. See F. W. Thomas, "Oṁ Maṇi Padme Hūṁ," p. 464; and A. H. Francke, "The Meaning of the Oṁ Maṇi Padme Hūṁ Formula," pp. 402-403. This interpretation previously noted by Hodgson in The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1835, p. 196, (as cited by Thomas, p. 464).

73. Similar to cakramusala, 'having discus and club.' See William Whitney, Sanskrit Grammar, 1293b.

74. Franklin Edgerton, Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar, 8.28, reports the use of an -e vocative for masculine -a stems. R. Pischel, Comparative Grammar of the Prākrit Languages, 366b, reports this case ending for Māgadhī and Ardhamāgadhī. Some scholars have postulated the original form to be a feminine Maṇipadmā. See Dayal, The Bodhisattva Doctrine, p. 49.

75. KKM-2-a, p. 21.

76. P. 29.

77. Pp. 34-35.

78. KKM-2-c, p. 34.

79. These two lines from the Hevajra Tantra I.v.11. See David Snellgrove, ed., and trans., The Hevajra Tantra, vol. 2, p. 17.

80. These lines from the Abhisamayālaṁkāra, 5.21. See P. L. Vaidya, ed., Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā, p. 523.

81. Unable to identify the source of these lines.

82. See p. 193 seq. below.

83. KKM-2-b, p. 30.

84. KKM-3, p. 30, specifies that rocks, mountains, etc., all physical forms appearing in nature, are to be seen as Avalokiteśvara.

85. According to KKM-3, p. 30, this includes sounds from both animate beings and inanimate objects.

86. KKM-2-b, p. 30.

87. KKM-3, p. 31; "khyer-so gsum gyi ting-dzin." Possibly stemming from the smṛtyupasthāna practices. Cf. Dayal, The Bodhisattva Doctrine, p. 82 seq., citing Aśvaghoṣa, Saundarānandakāvya, XIV, p. 35: "So you should preserve mindfulness and self-possession in all actions such as sitting, looking round and speaking, etc."

88. KKM-2-b, p. 30.

89. Cf., the description of Avalokiteśvara in the Tshem-bu dMar-khrid, as in 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po, 'Phags pa thugs rje chen po'i rnal 'byor la brten nas rang gzhan gyi don bya tshul snying por dril ba phan bde'i myur lam, p. 615.

90. This variation met with in a number of descriptions of Avalokiteś-vara. See, for example, the version of the sKyer-sgang dMar-khrid by Kong-sprul, Thugs rje chen po'i..., p. 574.

91. Khrid-brgya, p. 432. However, Kong-sprul, Thugs rje chen po'i..., p. 574 describes the Avalokiteśvara of the sKyer-sgang dMar-khrid as being pure white.

92. Included in the Tshem-bu dMar-khrid, as in 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po, Phags pa thugs rje..., p. 614; in the sKyer-sgang dMar-khrid as in Kong-sprul, Thugs rje chen po'i..., p. 572; and elsewhere.

93. Explained in detail in the Tshem-bu dMar-khrid, as in Kong-sprul, Thugs rje chen po'i..., p. 533 seq.

94. Kong-sprul, Thugs rje chen po'i..., p. 549.

95. It would be of interest in this regard to trace the history of visualization in Buddhism. The mentally imagined objects (kasiṇa) in the śamatha practices and the visualization of the Pure Lands in East Asian Buddhism probably precede the practice in tantric Buddhism.

96. sDe-zhung Rinpoche, personal communication, 1979.

97. See Lassing and Wayman, Introduction, p. 163 seq., where mKhas-grub-rje reports on the controversy in Tibet regarding whether the as-self visualization is possible in the Kriyā tantras. He states that the previous Tibetan lamas (= rNying-ma-pas?) held that as-self is possible only in the higher tantras, but that the dGe-lugs-pa position differs from this view.

98. The commentaries have not specifically noted the deliberate simplification of this practice in the KKM. However, a comparison of the KKM with the dMar-khrids clearly reveals this relationship. For example, the Tshem-bu dMar-khrid, as in Kong-sprul, Thugs rje chen po'i..., p. 577, defines the production stage, up to the statement about Avalokiteśvara leaning his back against the moon aura, as the production of the visualized body. The next step in this dMar-khrid is the invitation of the actual wisdom beings in the space in front of the meditator. The meditator visualizes elaborate offerings for them, and then the visualized body is imbued with the wisdom of all chosen deities ("rang nyid yi dam kun 'dus su gyur"). This statement corresponds to the KKM's "He has become the essence of all objects of refuge" ("skyabs gnas kun 'dus ngo bor gyur"). The Tshem-bu dMar-khrid continues with the visualization of the guru as Amitābha who is granting initiation to the meditator, the imbuing of this guru with the actual wisdom of Amitābha, and the chanting of the supplication "I bow to the lord Avalokiteśvara..." as in the KKM. Following the supplication, all external appearances are visualized as being like a rainbow, and containing gods and palaces, which corresponds to the similar visualization in the KKM.

99. For example, the KKM taught by Kalu Rinpoche adds a prayer for rebirth in Sukhāvatī at the end of the sādhana. See Chenrezig Meditation, manual distributed by Karma Kunkhyab Choling, in New York, N.Y.

100. sDe-zhung Rinpoche, personal communication, 1979.

101. KKM-2-b, p. 23, "lan du mar zhal dngos su bstan nas stsal ba'i gdams pa'i snying po."

102. KKM-2-b, p. 31.

103. See B-4, p. 541; also Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas, Ngo mtshar sprul ba'i sku mchog ris med gter ston rim par byon pa rnams kyi gsol 'debs rgyas par bkod pa mos gus rgya mtsho'i rlabs phreng, p. 27: "Thang rgyal sgyu 'phrul mnga' ris gu ger byon/'phags pas rjes bzung brgya dang sum bcur bzhugs/ 'gro don dpag med mdzad nas 'od skur gshegs/ grub mchog tshul khrims bzang po la gsol ba 'debs/."

The 'Chi med dpal ster Long-Life Meditations

The celestial Buddha Amitābha and his counterpart Amitāyus have long held an important place in Mahāyāna Buddhism. The Sukhāvatīvyūhasūtra, a relatively early Mahāyāna scripture, became the basis for this Buddha's role in the Pure Land schools of China and Japan.[1] In Tibetan Buddhism, the Amitābha cult includes a Pure Land aspect as well, prayers for rebirth in Sukhāvatī being popular, but the emphasis of Amitābha meditation/worship is different than that of the Far East and somewhat unique in Buddhism. Amitābha is viewed in Tibet primarily with refernce to his tantric position as the master of the lotus family (padmakula) of Buddhas.[1a] As such he is considered to be the personification of Discriminating Wisdom (so-sor rtog-pa'i ye-shes) and the ultimate source of meditation systems connected to the lotus family, which would include any system related to Avalokiteśvara.

A special type of practice has evolved around Amitāyus which has become widespread in Tibetan Buddhism. This is the system of the 'long-life initiation' (tshe-dbang) and its accompanying sādhanas. During the initiation ceremony the teacher is believed to confer the power of longevity (or, sometimes, immortality) through a visualized transmission of the "realization of primordial deathlessness." Such ceremonies are performed by Lamas of all the Tibetan sects. One of the major long-life initiation systems is attributed to Thang-stong. Other long-life initiations originate with Ma-gcig Grub-pa'i rGyal-mo, the sTag-lung-pas, and lHo-brag Las-kyi rDo-rje.[2] There are numerous long-life traditions from the Discovered Treasure cycles.[3] In addition, several other figures in the tantric pantheon are connected

with long life, most notably the white Tārā (Yi-bzhin 'Khor-lo), and Uṣṇīṣavijāya.

Thang-stong's teaching on Amitāyus is commonly referred to as the _'Chi med dpal ster_ (herein abbreviated CM) which translates 'Glorious Grant of Immortality.' The popularity of the CM is due in large extent to Thang-stong's fame as a master of the power (_siddhi_) of long life. That Thang-stong lived 128 years is offered as proof of this power.[4] The introductions to the CM often refer to his longevity as a validation for the efficacy of the system. bsTan-'dzin Ye-shes lHun-grub states that many of the followers of the CM lived more than 100 years,[5] and other writers list the lCags-zam-pas who lived to very old ages.[6]

There are numerous sādhanas and initiations related to the CM, all of which claim to be based on Thang-stong's original teaching. The following texts on the CM were used in the current study. It should be noted that this is not an exhaustive list of the extant literature on the subject, as variations on the CM were adopted by a number of sects and sub-sects.

CM-1: _Tshe sgrub nye brgyud kyi sgrub thabs 'chi med grub pa'i zhal lung_.

By bsTan-'dzin Ye-shes lHun-grub.

Published in _sGrub thabs kun btus_, vol. Pa, pp. 592-622.

a) (same title as CM-1) (p. 593).

Content: Description of ritual equipment (_yo-byad_) (p. 593); sādhana (p. 593); abbreviated initiation (which is expanded in CM-1-c) (p. 598).

Lineage:

Kun-bzang sNang-ba mTha'-yas (Amitābha)[8]
mGon-po Tshe-dpag-med (Amitāyus)

rTa-mgrin dBang-gi rGyal-po (Hayagrīva)
sLop-dpon Padma 'Byung-gnas (Padmasaṁbhava)
Grub-chen Thang-stong rGyal-po
Kun-spangs Chos-kyi Nyi-ma
'Jam-mgon Kun-dga' Grol-mchog
Ngag-dbang Nyi-zla bZang-po
rJe-btsun Ngag-dbang Nyi-ma
Kun-dga' bSod-nams dBang-phyug
rMor-chen Kun-dga' lHun-grub

b) Nye brgyud tshe grub kyi tshe 'gugs 'chi med 'od snang (p. 599).

Content: Prayer to the lineage, requesting the power of long life.

c) Nye brgyud tshe sgrub 'chi med dpal ster gyi dbang chog bdud rtsi'i chu rgyun (p. 600).

Content: Detailed initiation, including summary of Thang-stong's life and the history of the CM. Quotes Ngag-gi dBang-phyug Grags-pa, a eulogistic biography of Thang-stong,[9] and other sources.

Lineage (Statement that Thang-stong granted this teaching to both rDo-ring Kun-spangs-pa and bShes-gnyen bKra-shis bZang-po, and that they in turn transmitted it to Kun-dga' Grol-mchog) (p. 613):

Thang-stong rGyal-po
rDo-ring Kun-spangs-pa
bShes-gnyen bKra-shis bZang-po
'Jam-mgon Grol-mchog
Ngag-dbang Nyi-zla bZang-po
rDo-rje 'Chang dBang-phyug Rab-brtan
mGon-po bSod-nams mChog-ldan
Kun-gzigs lNga-pa Chen-po (the Fifth Dalai Lama)
Chos-rgyal bTer-bdag Gling-pa
Mang-thos-pa Tshes-dbang Mi-'gyur rDo-rje
Kho-bo (bsTan-'dzin Ye-shes lHun-grub)

Statement that the author also used material from the life extension systems of the Fifth Dalai Lama and of Chos-rje Gling-pa.

CM-2: Nye brgyud tshe rta zung 'brel 'chi med dpal ster gyi sgrub thabs dbang chog man ngag dang bcas pa.

Published in sGrub thabs kun btus, vol. Ka, pp. 427-470.

a) (no title) (p. 428).

Content: The core text, said to be the words of Thang-stong rGyal-po. Includes prayer to the lineage, the mantra, and statements concerning

the efficacy of initiation in leading the practitioner to rebirth in Sukhāvatī (text translated below, p. 152).

b) Tshe sgrub nye brgyud 'chi med dpal ster (p. 428).

Content: Visualization system for the sādhana and the initiation rite.

c) Bla ma zhi khro'i tshe sgrub dang tshe dbang bskur tshul gyi cho ga 'chi med rdo rje'i rgya mdud (p. 430).

By Kun-dga' bKra-shis.[10]

Content: Initiation. Includes summary of Thang-stong's life and the history of the CM. Quotes from the same eulogistic biography as does CM-1-c.

Lineage (additions [kha-skong] by 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po) (pp. 434-435):

sNang-ba mTha'-yas (Amitābha)
Tshe-dpag-med (Amitāyus)
rTa-mgrin dBang-rgyal (Hayagrīva)
Padma 'Byung-gnas (Padmasaṃbhava)
Thang-stong rGyal-po
Kun-spang-rje
Grol-mchog
Nyi-zla
dBang-phyug-dpal
Ngag-dbang Chos-grags
Kun-dga' Don-grub
Kun-dga' bSod-nams
(kha-skong)
bSod-nams dBang-phyug
Kun-dga' bKra-shis
bSod-nams Rin-chen
Kun-dga' Blo-gros
Nam-mkha' 'Chi-med
Kun-dga' bsTan-'dzin

d) Nye brgyud tshe rta zung 'brel gyi bsnyen sgrub las gsum gyi gsal byed snying por dril ba 'chi med dga' ston (p. 449).

By 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po.

Content: Description of ritual equipment (p. 449); detailed sādhana (p. 451); statement that the text is based on the notes of Kun-dga' dPal-'byor, the student of Nyi-zla bZang-po (p. 459); sādhana in summary (p. 460); practices for the sake others, i.e., the making of pills (ril-bu) for life-extension (p. 460);[11] initiation (p. 464).

References are made to the works of bsTan-'dzin Ye-shes lHun-grub, Kun-dga' bKra-shis, and Blo-gter dBang-po.

e) _Tshe sgrub nye brgyud kyi sgo nas brtan bzhugs 'bul pa'i cho ga nye bar bsdus pa 'chi med grub pa'i dga' ston_ (p. 465).

According to "Grub-thob chen-po ngur-smrig 'chang-ba'i rnam-par snang-pa Mañjughoṣa" (= 'Jam-dbyang mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po?)

Content: Offering and blessing of the ritual equipment involved in the ceremony.

f) _Nye brgyud tshe rta zung 'brel gyi brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs smon lam dang bcas pa 'chi med rdo rje'i glud dbyangs_ (p. 468).

By 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po, written at Ewaṃ Thar-rtse.

Content: Prayer to the lineage.

CM-3: _Nye brgyud tshe rta zung 'brel gyi rgyun khyer shin tu bsdus pa 'chi med grub pa'i zhal lung_.

Published in _Thang stong ba'i chos mdzod_, vol. 4, pp. 629-651.

a) _Nye brgyud tshe rta zung 'brel 'chi med dpal ster gyi sgom bzlas rgyun khyer mdor bsdud_ (p. 629).

By 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po.

Content: Versified liturgy for the sādhana (_sgom-bzlas_), based on the ancient writing (_yig-rnying_) core text.

b) (_gTor 'bul_) (p. 635).

By sGer-ba-pa rJe-btsun Ngag-dbang Nyi-ma.

Content: Liturgy for offering ritual cakes (_gtor-ma_).

c) _Tshe sgrub mdor bsdus grub dbang dgongs bcud_ (p. 636).

By Bya-btang rGan-po Tshe-dbang-grub, in attendance to Gong-sa sKyabs-mgon Chen-po.

Content: Short versified visualization instructions for the CM sādhana.

d) (no title) (p. 640).

Written at Sa-skya Pho-brang according to the writings of Chos-rje bDun-pa (= bsTan-'dzin Ye-shes lHun-grub?).

Content: Blessings for the ritual equipment.

e) Nye brgyud 'chi med dpal ster gyi tshogs mchod dge legs char 'bebs (p. 643).

By Bya-btang rGan-po Grub-ming in attendance to Sa-skya sKyabs-mgon bDag-chen rGyal-ba'i dBang-po at Ri-bo-che.

Content: Extra prayers for the offering feast (gaṇacakra).

In Thang-stong's biographies we find only one reference to his receipt of instruction on Amitāyus from a human teacher: B-1 states that Thang-stong was initiated into the Amitāyus maṇḍala by an Indian Siddha at Nalanda known as Atikara who, appropriately enough, was 230 years old. Immediately following, Thang-stong is said to have had a vision of Amitāyus with consort in a maṇḍala of the five Jinas, along with Hayagrīva, all of whom had emanated from Atikara's body.[12] However, it is difficult to determine whether this event should be construed as a successive transmission from a living teacher, or a direct transmission which occurred only on the visionary level. The fact that Atikara is described as having assumed an illusory body (sku-lus sprul-bsgyur mdzad-pa) is especially reminiscent of the descriptions of teachers who are seen in the Pure Vision state.

There are references to Thang-stong's involvement with life extension techniques throughout B-1. He gave an 'attention-directing deathless yantra' (rigs-gtad 'chi-med 'khrul-'khor) at Karmapa mThong-ba Don-ldan's camp;[13] he practiced meditation and worship (sgrub-mchod) of Amitāyus at the meditation site of Ras-chung-pa called Byar-po

Nags-gyi dGon-pa, after which Thang-stong is said to have gained control over his life span;[14] and he gave an initiation that "conquers the Lord of Death" at the Bon monastery of Dar-sdings.[15]

The major visionary event in which Thang-stong received the CM precepts is said to have occurred when he met Padmasaṁbhava on an island to the south of India. The event is described in depth in B-1:[16] Thang-stong decided to visit Sing-ga-la Srin-mo'i-gling and U-rgyan.[17] He was refused transport on the trading vessel that usually made the trip because of the appearance of dangerous sea monsters. So Thang-stong travelled "via his magic power and compassion" instead. Once on the island of Sing-ga-la, Thang-stong approached a three-peaked mountain. The two side peaks resonated teachings of sNang-ba mTha'-yas (Amitābha) and Avalokiteśvara,[18] and the center peak supported a palace called Padma-'od.[19] In that palace, Thang-stong met Padmasaṁbhava and was initiated into the maṇḍala of the bKa'-brgyad.[20]

No indication that this vision is connected to a life extension meditation is given in B-1. Howver, essentially the same incident is reported in the CM initiation texts by bsTan-'dzin Ye-shes lHun-grub and by Kun-dga' bKra-shis. bsTan-'dzin's version is closest to the account in B-1, although the island where the teaching took place is called rNga-yab Laṅka-gling.[21] bsTan-'dzin explicitly specifies that during the vision Thang-stong received an initiation into the "maṇḍala of deathlessness" and a method of life extension connected to guruyoga. According to Kun-dga' bKra-shis's account, the incident took palce in the palace on Zang-mdog dPal-gyi Ri-bo, a mountain which is said to be on the rNga-yab island. Kun-dga' also connects

the vision to the CM, but like B-1, he lists only the bKa'-brgyad as the subject of the transmission.[22] Finally, B-3 also mentions this event, labelling the location as Srin-yul Zang-mdog dPal-gyi Ri-bo, but further confuses the issue by calling the teaching Thang-stong received there the sGrub-chen brgyad (lit. The Eight Mahāsiddhas).[23]

CM-1-c is the only account which states that the teaching Thang-stong received from Padmasaṁbhava concerned Amitāyus and life extension. Most of the sources identify the teaching as the bKa'-brgyad, and at present we have no indication of how that system is connected to the content of the CM. It should be noted however that the same vision is recounted as the origin of the bKa'-brgyad teachings of Thang-stong which are presented in the <u>Grub thob thugs tig</u>,[24] but again there is no mention of the CM.

Another vision by Thang-stong is also connected to the life extension system of the CM. According to B-1, B-3, CM-1-c, and CM-2-c, Thang-stong saw one thousand Buddhas and other deities, the foremost of whom was Vajrasattva, immediately after the vision of Padmasaṁbhava. At the request of Padmasaṁbhava, Vajrasattva conferred upon Thang-stong the teachings of rDzogs-chen. Both CM-1-c and CM-2-c substantiate this event with a quote from a eulogistic biography (<u>rnam-thar gsol-'debs</u>) of Thang-stong, a work which is not otherwise known to us.[25] The quoted passage recounts both the vision of Padmasaṁbhava and of Vajrasattva. But neither B-1, B-3, CM-1-c, CM-2-c, or the eulogistic biography give any explanation of how the teachings of Vajrasattva are connected to the CM.

Further, a tradition independent of CM-1 and CM-2 reports a different type of visionary origin of the CM. Thang-stong's prodigious Discovered Treasure find at bSam-yas mChims-phu, which is recounted in several sources, is identified by B-4[26] and by a history of the rNying-ma-pas[27] to have included the CM. B-1 also lists the contents of this cache at mChims-phu, but no mention is made of the CM or anything related to life extension. However, B-1's description of the vision which preceded the mChims-phu discovery does indicate a connection to Amitāyus. According to B-1's account, Thang-stong spent eight months in meditative retreat near a red rock at mChims-phu. One day he saw a canopy-shaped red light emerge from the rock. The light turned into the mantra of Amitāyus "that defeats the Lord of Death" which was circling clockwise. The mantra then dissolved into the rock. Thang-stong stared at the rock for a few moments, and a box shaped like a human head popped out of the rock, containing many Treasure texts written on rolls of paper.[28]

That both the Pure Vision of Padmasaṁbhava and the Discovered Treasures found at bSam-yas mChims-phu are considered by Kun-dga' bKra-shis to be the basis of the CM is clear from his statement that "this (CM) is a combination of Pure Vision and Discovered Treasure."[29] A similar statement is found in Kong-sprul's catalogue to the Rin chen gter mdzod[30] where the CM is defined as "The 'Chi-med dPal-ster, connected to Amitāyus and Hayagrīva, is a combination of what Thang-stong rGyal-po heard in actuality from Guru Rinpoche (Padmasaṁbhava) and the Discovered Treasure from mChims-phu."[31]

However, since CM-1-c, the earliest of the available versions

of the CM, does not mention the find at bSam-yas mChims-phu,[31] and since B-1's list of the texts from mChims-phu does not include the CM, there remains some question as to the origin of the tradition that states that the CM is based in part on a Discovered Treasure. It may also be added that the voluminous Rin chen gter mdzod collection of Discovered Treasures does not include the CM, although it is mentioned in the table of contents.

Another question in regard to the CM concerns the original form of the teaching. We presently have no description of the contents of the life extension techniques that Thang-stong heard from Padmasaṃbhava, nor of the contents of the Discovered Treasure text from mChims-phu. The first statement about the codification of the CM material[32] is that the teaching was transmitted orally, without a text (yi-ge med-pa'i tshul-du bzhugs-ba), down to Nyi-zla bZang-po, who is listed third, or fourth, after Thang-stong in the lineage. Nyi-zla bZang-po wrote three texts: the history of the directly transmitted life extension techniques (tshe-sgrub nye-brgyud kyi lo-rgyus), the actual direct transmission (nye-brgyud ngo-bo), and the directly transmitted CM (nye-brgyud 'chi-med dpal-ster). These three texts constitute "approximately the core text" (gzhung rtsa-ba lta-bu) of the CM tradition. The same account also states that it was after Nyi-zla bZang-po's work that the teaching became known as the Tshe-sgrub 'Chi-med dPal-ster.[33]

bsTan-'dzin's description of these three texts implies that the latter two would be in the genre of visionary document as we have defined above in Chapter 3. Unfortunately the nature of the contents of these texts is not indicated. It has also not been made clear

if they represented a memorized oral text originally taught by Thang-stong, or whether they were Nyi-bzla bZang-po's composition based on teachings that he had received. Thus we cannot conclusively determine if the currently available core text of the CM corresponds to the work of Nyi-zla bZang-po.

The visionary core text of the CM that is extant seems to be of the ancient writing (yig-rnying) genre. The text is embedded in several of the sādhanas of the CM literature; CM-2 presents it separately and indicates that it is "the word of the Mahāsiddha." That Thang-stong is the last member of the lineage invoked therein indicates the antiquity of the text, and yet makes Thang-stong's own authorship of it unlikely. The CM core text may be translated as follows:

> Oṁ Āḥ Hūṁ Hrīḥ Hrīḥ. sNang-ba mTha'-yas, protect all beings! Protector Amitāyus, grant immortality to all beings! Powerful king Hayagrīva, remove the obstructions of beings! Padmasaṁbhava, be the refuge of beings in (these) bad times! Supplication to Thang-stong rGyal-po is without deception. I supplicate--please remove difficulties and obstructions! Bless me and grant the power of immortality! By saying Oṁ āḥ hūṁ hrīḥ hrīḥ vajra guru padma siddhi puṇye jñāna āyuḥ siddhi jaḥ, and being initiated, the obstructions to life in one's situation will subside. Having attained the power of immortal life, one will finally be born in the land of Sukhāvatī. All the words of the Venerable Mahāsiddha."[34]

The brevity of the core text confirms the assertion of several of our sources that the ancient writing does not contain many of the elements present in the later systematizations of the CM, such as the offering of ritual cakes (gtor-ma), the confession of sins, or the meditation on the four boundless states (catvaryapramāṇāni).[35] However, mKhyen-brtse's statement that the CM ancient writing lists only four elements of the nectar (amṛta) and fails to list the element of space

(ākāśa)[36] indicates that a CM core text that discusses the nectar was available to mKhyen-brtse.

Several distinctive elements of the CM core text may be identified: 1) invocation of the lineage, which signifies the CM's characteristic system of visualizing all of the gurus of the tradition stacked upon the head of Amitāyus; 2) the mantra, which is peculiar to this tradition; and 3) the emphasis on the efficacy of initiation to engender the power of immortality. These three elements are the basis for the developed CM system that is described in the sādhanas and initiation texts at hand.

The CM visualization system is substantially the same in all of our sources. It may be summarized as follows: The life-obstructing demons are appeased by an offering of ritual cakes (gtor-ma). Then all phenomena dissolve into emptiness. From out of the state of emptiness appear the "objects of refuge," led by either Hayagrīva or Amitāyus. The practitioner chants the Ma nam mkha' ma refuge and meditates on the four boundless states. The visualization dissolves into emptiness. Then the world reappears as the Sukhāvatī Pure Land. On an elaborate throne there appears the red seed-syllable hrīḥ which turns into the practitioner-as-Aparimitāyurjñāna.[37] On the head of the practitioner's visualized image (samayasattva) sits the practitioner's guru, on top of whom sits his guru, etc., up to Thang-stong, Padmasaṁbhava, Amitāyus, Hayagrīva, and sNang-ba mTha'-yas. The 'actual wisdom being' (jñānasattva) is invited to enter each of the visualized figures. Light emanates from the heart-center of each figure. The light touches all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, collects their

essential qualities, and returns to the vessel of life (tshe-'bum) held by Aparimitāyurjñāna, to be absorbed into the nectar of immortality. The contents of the nectar are visualized in detail. The vessel of nectar overflows, pervades the practitioner-as-Aparimitāyurjñāna's body, and confers the power of immortal life. The practitioner chants words of praise to the lineage, the liturgy for which begins with the first five lines of the ancient writing, and chants the CM mantra. The visualization then dissolves into emptiness, and the practitioner experiences the 'basic state of primordial immortality' ('chi-med gnyug-ma'i gnas-lug).[38] The meditation concludes with the statement that all merit gained thereby is to be shared with all sentient beings.

The meditation system of the CM is considered to be simple and lacking elaborate ritual. It is classified by the tradition[39] as a 'non-embellished' (spros-med) system.[40] The offering of ritual cakes, arousal of compassion, etc., are explained by mKhyen-brtse to be later interpolations for those practitioners who prefer 'embellished' (spros-pa) or 'extremely embellished' (shin-tu spros-pa) meditation systems.[41] According to CM-1-c, the CM system is associated to the Anuttara tantras.[42] This classification is in accordance with the CM's label of 'non-embellished.'

There is disagreement as to which tantric canon the CM is affiliated. bsTan-'dzin relates the CM to the New Tantra translations of Rong-zom Chos-kyi bZang-po[43] and others.[44] Kun-dga' bKra-shis states that the CM is affiliated to the Old Tantras.[45] This discrepancy may reflect bsTan-'dzin's omission, and Kun-dga' bKra-shis's inclusion, of the Discovered Treasure theory of the origin of the CM,

a theory which is tantamount to claiming affiliation to the Old Tantras.

The issue perhaps could be resolved after a comparative study of the characteristic features of the Discovered Treasure and the New Tantra Amitāyus systems. However, the fact that both the Pure Vision and Discovered Treasure theories of the CM's origin involve Padmasaṁbhava indicates the essentially Old Tantra affiliation of this system. In addition, the first members of the CM lineage include the trio of sNang-ba mTha'-yas, Amitāyus, and Padmasaṁbhava that is standard in the Discovered Treasure life extension systems.[46] The presence of this trio tends to affirm the CM's connection to the Old Tantras.

The primary distinguishing feature of the CM is that it combines the long-life tradition with the guruyoga tradition.[47] The visualization of the lineage of gurus stacked upon the head of the practitioner-as-Aparimitāyurjñāna may be unique to the CM system. This emphasis on the guru functions to underline the inpsirational role of Thang-stong rGyal-po as the legendary guru who lived for 128 years.

The following texts represent visions of Thang-stong rGyal-po and the CM by later practitioners. These traditions are classified either as Rediscovered Treasure (yang-gter) or as Pure Vision. Most of these texts retain the basic meditational system, mantra, and liturgy of the CM, with the interpolation of additional vizualization schemes.

CM-4: bKa' gter dag snang zung du 'brel ba'i tshe sgrub shin tu nye brgyud kyi sgrub thabs dbang chog dang bcas pa.

By bSam-gtan dPal-'byor.

Published in sGrub thabs kun btus, vol. Ka, pp. 471-474.

Content: Sādhana based on a Pure Vision of Thang-stong. Visualization includes a crossed five-pointed vajra made out of meteorite iron, in the center of which is the figure of Thang-stong. Mantra: Oṁ amāraṇi jīvanti guru padma krodha punye dhyāna āyur siddhi hrīḥ hrīḥ hrīḥ. Lineage reproduces that of CM-2-a.

CM-5: bKa' gter dag snang zung 'jug gi tshe sgrub tshe dbang dang bcas pa nye brgyud 'chi med dpal ster gsar pa.

By Kun-bzang lHun-grub, based on a Pure Vision of Thang-stong and Amoghapāśa by Chos-rje Gling-pa,[48] and on a Discovered Treasure of Chos-rje Gling-pa.

Published in sGrub thabs kun btus, vol. Ka, pp. 474-480.

Content: Initiation. Visualization involves the four-armed Avalokiteśvara with Amitābha on his crown, followed by a visualization of Thang-stong with Hayagrīva at his throat. Quotes the Discovered Treasure of Chos-rje Gling-pa (p. 474). Mantra: Oṁ amāraṇi jīvantiye svāhā. Incorporates the content of CM-2-a.

CM-6: Yang zab bla ma'i srog sgrub mkha' 'gro'i gsang mdzod.

Based on a Discovered Treasure of mKhar-mdo Chos-kyi rDo-rje. Colophon (p. 387) states that the text is grounded in the CM, and is based on teachings of Thang-stong rGyal-po received in reality, meditative experience, and dream.

Published in Thang stong chos mdzod, Vol. 4, pp. 321-388.

Content: Visualization of Amitāyus-as-self, with five-petalled lotus, and five aspects of the guru symbolized by five vajras and five bodies. Complex visualization of many of the major figures in Indian and Tibetan iconography. Prayers for long life, including the liturgy from the CM ancient writing. Mantras include that of the CM and others.

Variety of lineages cited (p. 379 seq.).

Statement (p. 387) that this text is accepted by both the New and Old Tantric lineages.

Colophon quotes a statement of Thang-stong similar to the ancient writing presented in CM-2-a, with the exception that the phrase "By practicing thusly" (de-ltar nyams-su blangs-pas) is substituted for the phrase "by being initiated" (dbang-bskur-bas) that appears in CM-2-a.

Notes

1. F. Max Mueller and B. Nanjio, ed., Sukhāvatīvyūha.

1a. An early source of the system of the five Buddha families and the corresponding five wisdoms seems to be the Guhyasamājatantra. See Alex Wayman, Yoga of the Guhyasamājatantra, p. 122 seq., and throughout.

2. bsTan-'dzin, CM-1-c, lists the Tshe dbang lo brgya ma by Chos-rje Gling-pa and the Rigs lnga 'chi med mchog spyin by the Fifth Dalai Lama as having influenced his own work on the CM.

3. See Rin chen gter mdzod, mTshur-phu ed., vols. dza - zha.

4. See p. 50 above, n. 7.

5. CM-1-c, p. 613.

6. See CM-2-c, p. 441.

7. See p. 172 seq. below for his role in the SPNG tradition.

8. sNang-ba mTha'-yas is an alternate Tibetan translation of Amitābha which usually is translated as 'Od-dpag-med. sNang-ba mTha'-yas connotes the Dharmakāya Amitābha.

9. Not the same as any of our biographies of Thang-stong at hand. See n. 25 below.

10. Identified by statement in CM-2-d, p. 451: "'Jam mgon kun dga' bkra shis kyi gsung rab 'chi med rdo rje'i rgya mdud."

11. Cf. B-1, p. 275, which states that Thang-stong received five pills for immortality ('chi-med ril-bu) from Amitāyus with consort. See also B-3, p. 278, verse beginning "sman gyi bla mas...".

12. p. 57.

13. B-1, p. 121.

14. B-1, p. 203.

15. B-1, pp. 257-8.

16. B-1, p. 95 seq.

17. See p. 55 above, n. 46.

18. CM-1-c, p. 614, substitutes 'Amitāyus' here.

19. Zhu-chen Tshul-khrims Rin-chen, sDe dge'i bstan 'gyur gyi dkar chag, pp. 327-8, also affirms that Thang-stong "met" Padmasaṁbhava at dPal-ri Padma-'od.

20. See p. 84 above, and p. 244 seq. below.

21. CM-1-c, p. 614. B-1 also seems to know the place as rNga-yab, as the inhabitants are referred to by that name on p. 97.

22. CM-2-c, p. 439 seq.

23. B-3, p. 727.

24. See p. 244 seq. below.

25. CM-2-c quotes this biography (rnam-thar gsol-'debs) as follows: "O rgyan mkha' 'gro'i gling du phebs pa'i tshe/ padma 'byung gnas rgyal po'i cha lugs can/ dpa' bo mkha' 'gro du mas bskor ba la/ sgrub chen bka' brgyad la sogs gsan la 'dud/ sangs rgyas stong sogs yi dam du ma gzigs/ khyad pa ston pa rdo rje sems dpa' la/ o rgyan chen pos zhu ba mdzad byas nas/ bla med rdzogs pa chen po gsan la 'dud/
Same quote in CM-1-c, p. 612, with variant" ...mkha' 'gro du mas bskor ba las..."

26. B-4, p. 541.

27. Kun-bzang Nges-don Klong-yangs, Bod du byung ba'i gsang sngags snga 'gyur bstan 'dzin skyes mchog rim byon gyi rnam thar nor bu'i do shal, p. 190.

28. B-1, p. 116.

29. CM-2-c, p. 439: "'dir ni gter ma dang/ dag snang ma zung du 'brel pa...".

30. dKar-chag, p. 206: "Thang stong rgyal pos guru rin po che las dngos su gsan pa dang mchims phu'i gter ma zung 'jug tshe rta zung 'brel 'chi med dpal ster." It should be noted that the phrase "bKa' gter dag snang zung du 'brel ba" in the title to CM-4 and CM-5 refers not to the CM's origin, but rather to the visionary origins of CM-4 and CM-5 themselves.

31. bsTan-'dzin's introductory statement to CM-1-c, p. 593, is that the CM is based on the directly transmitted precepts of life extension (tshe-sgrub nye-brgyud) actually (dngos-su) heard from Padmasaṁbhava.

32. CM-1-c, p. 613.

33. This seems to suggest that the name 'Chi med dpal ster is Nyi-zla bZang-po's composition.

34. Tibetan text of CM-2-a:

"Oṁ Āḥ Hūṁ Hrīḥ Hrīḥ/ sNang ba mtha' yas 'gro kun rjes su skyong/ Tshe dpag med mgon 'gro la 'chi med ster/ rTa mgrin dbang rgyal 'gro ba'i bar cad sel/ Padma 'byung gnas snyigs dus 'gro ba'i skyabs/ Thang stong rgyal por gsol btab slu ba med/ gSol ba 'debs so 'gal rkyen bar cad sol/ Byin gyis rlobs shig 'chi med dngos grub stsol/ Oṁ āḥ hūṁ hrīḥ hrīḥ vajra guru padma siddhi punye jñāna āyuḥ siddhi jaḥ zhes dbang bskur bas gnas skabs su tshe'i bar cad zhi zhing/ 'chi med tshe'i dngos grub thob nas/ mthar thug bde ba can gyi zhing du skye bar 'gyur ro/ rje grub chen gyi gsung gtsang ma'o//"

35. CM-1-c, p. 597, CM-2-d, p. 459.

36. CM-2-d, p. 456. mKhyen-brtse also discusses other points concerning the content of the nectar here.

37. Aparimitāyurjñāna is red, but otherwise iconographically identical to the white Saṁbhogakāya Amitāyus. Cf. To. 65 (Ārya-aparimitāyurjñāna-nāma-mahāyānasūtra). The introduction of this figure into the CM system seems to be a later interpolation, as he is not mentioned in the ancient writing.

The visualization of the deity would appear to be of the 'as-self' variety (bdag-bskyed), but it is defined by bsTan-'dzin, CM-1-c, p. 595, as "a production of (a visualization which is) an indivisible combination of 'in-front' and 'as-self' (mdun-bskyed rang-nyid dbyer-med-du bskyed-pa). See p. 86 above.

38. CM-1-c, p. 597.

39. CM-1-c, p. 598, CM-2-d, p. 459.

40. For the significance of this term, see Herbert Guenther, The Life and Teaching of Naropa, p. 4, n. 3; and Herbert Guenther, The Royal Song of Saraha, pp. 77, n.2; and 117, n. 42.

41. CM-2-d, p. 455.

42. CM-2-c, p. 607.

43. Rong-zom was an 11th century scholar, a contemporary of Atīśa, and is usually associated with the Old Tantra tradition. See George Roerich, Blue Annals, pp. 160-167.

44. CM-1-c, p. 607.

45. CM-2-c, p. 439.

46. See, for example, dKar-chag, p. 200 seq.

47. CM-1-c, p. 598. Cf. the guru yoga on Vajradhara attributed to Thang-stong, discussed below, p. 210 seq.

48. See Eva Dargyay, The Rise of Esoteric Buddhism, p. 211, n. 20.

The gSang spyod snyan brgyud Version of gCod

The Tibetan Buddhist practice of gCod (lit. 'Cutting'), is a meditative process of ritually cutting off, or murdering, demons (bdud-kyi gcod-yul). That this process is a metaphor for the destruction of ego or emotional obscuration (kleśa) is acknowledged by the tradition and often explained in such terms.

The practice of gCod usually involves a visualized dismemberment of the body, the pieces of which are imagined to be offered to the various demons in order to appease and control them. The tradition can be traced to pre-Buddhist practices, as similar rituals, though lacking the same soteriological import, have been recognized in Asian shamanist groups.[1]

In its Buddhist contexts, the practice of gCod is connected to the teachings of the Prajñāpāramitā and the cultivation (spyod-yul, a pun on gcod-yul used throughout the gCod literature) of the perfection of giving (dānapāramitā).[2] This connection is underscored by the inclusion of the mantra Gate gate paragate parasaṁgate bodhi svāhā from the Prajñāpāramitāhṛdayasūtra in the liturgies of the gCod practice.[3] According to dPa'-bo gTsug-lag, the realization of the emptiness of mind is essential for the performance of this meditation.[4] The statement that the Bodhisattva with a firm understanding of the Prajñāpāramitā cannot be frightened by demons is also cited as a canonical referent for gCod.[5] In general, the image of cutting appears in Buddhism with regard to the elimination of attachment to the substantiality of self and others. In the gCod practice, that which is to be cut (gcod-yul) is symbolized by the demon.

Precedents for other elements of the gCod practice may also be recognized in Buddhism. In particular, the act of offering the body as food to a needy being is often attributed to the Bodhisattva in the early Buddhist literature.[6]

The imagery and visualization techniques employed in the gCod meditations rest on the female figure of the Ḍākinī. The particular form of the Ḍākinī is not always specified, but she may usually be recognized to be a form of Vajrayoginī. Vajravārāhī and her black counterpart Vāramukha appear prominently in Thang-stong's version of gCod. Other sādhanas and offering-feast rites entail the visualization of the more general Five Classes of Ḍākinīs (mkha'-'gro sde-lnga). The Prajñāpāramitā personified as the female deity by the same name is also in evidence, in some lineages cited as the ultimate source for the system (dharmakāya). The deity Prajñāpāramitā becomes the object of the refuge liturgy in many of the gCod lineages.

The teachings of gCod are traditionally alleged to have originated with the Buddha himself, and to have been codified by Āryadeva.[7] The introduction of gCod to Tibet can be traced to the Indian Pha Dam-pa Sangs-rgyas. His student, the famed Tibetan yoginī Ma-gcig Lab-gyi sGron-ma (1031-1129), propagated gCod widely. Four major lineages of gCod are enumerated,[8] but these tend to overlap. The four may be listed as the Tshigs-bcad of Āryadeva; the Ro-nyams of Nāro; the 'Khrul-gcod of Guru Rinpoche;[9] and the Zhi-gcod of Pha Dam-pa.[10] The practice of gCod is subdivided further into 'male gCod' (pho-gcod), 'female gCod' (mo-gcod), and 'son gCod' (sras-gcod). The main factor which distinguishes these three divisions seems to be the lineage. All three lines passed through Ma-gcig.[11] Ma-gcig is

said to have received a successive transmission (ring-brgyud), direct transmission (nye-brgyud), and extremely direct transmission (shin-tu nye-brgyud).[12] Later, gCod spread to all of the sects of Tibetan Buddhism, but predominantly to the rNying-ma and bKa'-brgyud.

Thang-stong's recension of the gCod system of practice is known as the gSang spyod snyan brgyud (lit. 'The Whispered Transmission of the Secret Practice'), herein to be appreviated SPNG. There are also statements which indicate that he studied the successive transmission of gCod. Thang-stong seems to have had a particular interest in this practice because of the culturally imposed necessity, in 15th century Tibet, to ritually enact control over demons before initiating a construction project of any sort. The magical descriptions of Thang-stong's engineering endeavors and activities aimed at the "taming" of Tibet almost always include references to a struggle with the local nāgas and earth gods.

According to B-1, Thang-stong studied the gCod cycle (gcod-skor) with Chos-rje lHa-gdong-pa bSod-nams mChog-pa.[13] bsTan-'dzin Ye-shes lHun-grub mentions that he also studied gCod with Kun-spangs Don-yod rGyal-mtshan.[14] After Thang-stong received an initiation for Vajravārāhī from the wife of a wandering lama,[15] he is said to have performed the Secret Practice (gsang-spyod) at Ramadole.[16]

Thang-stong's first vision of Vajravārāhī seems to have occurred at Turquoise Lake (gYu-mtsho) in Tsāri.[17] The Ḍākinī is said to have appeared before Thang-stong and instructed him to go to Klo to "train" its cannibalistic inhabitants. Then Thang-stong converted the local demons, headed by the nāga king Varuṇa Seso, to Buddhism. He next proceeded to mTsho-rdzong, which is said to have been a

meditation site of Padmasambhava, and performed rites to subdue the eight types of demons, a grouping often described in the gCod literature.

B-2, the biography which was formulated by the SPNG lineage, reports that Thang-stong performed the ritual of cutting demons (bdud-gcod) at rNgam-pa rGra-grags Cemetery in Mon.[18] B-1 states that he trained ghosts and goblins at the same place without using the term gCod.[19] Another corroboration of an event mentioned in B-2 by B-1 concerns Thang-stong's activities at what is described as an Indian cemetery of the fierce ones (gtum-drag). B-1 states that Thang-stong initiated and trained Ḍākinīs and risen corpses (ro-langs) at that place.[20] B-2 describes the same incident as an overpowering of Ḍākinīs and meat-eating goblins.[21] Neither text specifically identifies Thang-stong's practice of gCod here, but the inclusion of the event in B-2 indicates a probable connection.

An incident mentioned by B-1 which is most likely related to gCod is Thang-stong's performance of the Nam mkha' sgo byed initiatory rite for his students at Ri-bo-che, on which occasion Vajravārāhī with retinue was seen in the sky by all who were present.[22]

We might also note that B-1 records Thang-stong's numerous visions of the Five Classes of Ḍākinīs (mkha'-'gro sde-lnga) and encounters with human females who are said to be an incarnation of a particular Ḍākinī.[23] Although these incidents cannot be shown to be directly connected with gCod, they emphasize Thang-stong's continued involvement with the female form of the Buddha figure which is central to the SPNG practice.

Explicit accounts of the visionary experience in which

Thang-stong received the SPNG teachings are brief. B-1 states that he heard "the profound precepts of the secret mantra" from Vajravārāhī at a cemetery in Kashmir called Rameśvara.[24] That this vision was the occasion of the receipt of the SPNG is indicated by B-2's verse concerning the same event:

> In the Kashmiri cemetery Rameśvara,
> Ma-gcig, the Venerable Vajravārāhī,
> Initiated him and manifestly displayed the SPNG to him.[25]

It will be noted that the expositor of this visionary teaching is the historical personage of Ma-gcig, who is here equated with the Ḍākinī Vajravārāhī.

The literature relating to the system of meditation ascribed to Thang-stong's vision has been edited and published periodically throughout the history of its transmission. Two parallel redactions, which differ primarily in the latest layers of the collection, have been published recently:

SP-1: gSang spyod snyan brgyud.
Based on the edition by Chos-kyi Blo-gros.
Published in Thang stong chos mdzod, vol. 1 - vol. 4, p. 286.

SP-2: Thang stong snyan brgyud.
Based on the edition by Si-tu Chos-kyi rGya-mtsho.
2 vols.

In its current form as presented in these two editions, the SPNG contains more than 60 texts which discuss a variety of topics including the system's doctrine, practice, philosophy, and history.

The complete title list will not be recorded here as it is available in the table of contents (dkar-chag) to each of the editions.

The organization of the material in the SPNG is indicative of the ways in which a visionary system was committed to writing, commented upon, and transformed in the course of its transmission. The SPNG displays the most well defined and extensive range of genres of visionary literature among the systems traceable to Thang-stong. The explicitly identified visionary core text seems to be of the earliest stratum, as are the sādhanas and commentarial works which are directly based on that core. Other interpretive and synthetic works appear in the later strata of the collection, although the exegetical approach was initiated as early as gShongs-chen (the first redactor of the collection), and the table of contents compiled by the latter indicates that the earlier editions may have included more commentarial material than is presently extant.

The visionary core text of the SPNG is the sNyan brgyud rdo rje tshig rkang.[26] This text is of the Vajrapada genre. As is typical of visionary documents, it lacks a colophon or other statement which would give any indication of its author or the circumstances of its composition. Instead, the opening phrase "Advice of the Ḍākinī" (ḍākimantriḥ) functions to establish the divine origin of this text.[27] This presentation of the Vajrapada as the words spoken by the Ḍākinī provides the authority and esoteric status of the SPNG, and implies that the text represents a record of the visionary instruction itself. In terms of the history of the vision and the formation of the SPNG, however, it should be noted that the text's expositor is only labelled generally as the Ḍākinī. There is no specific identification

of this figure with the Ḍākinī Vajravārāhī who granted teachings on the SPNG to Thang-stong at Rameśvara, as would be expected in light of the statements concerning the origin of the system as listed above. Nor is there any concrete indication that this text represents a vision of Thang-stong, other than its being positioned as the central visionary core of the collection. The vagueness of the Vajrapada's origin reflects the paucity of evidence to explain Thang-stong's precise role in the development of the SPNG, about which more will be said below.

The content of the Vajrapada consists of a series of cryptic verses which discuss the doctrinal basis of the SPNG. The main subject is the notion of charity (the giving of the body, and of the ego) in the context of the practice of gCod, and the meaning of 'demon' and the psychological significance of the various types of malevolent spirits.

Some of the words or sentences in the Vajrapada are the subject of commentaries by the early members of the SPNG lineage. These works are included directly after the Vajrapada in the current collections. Their generic type is the standard Tibetan commentarial format of khrid.

The commentaries to the Vajrapada discuss the key doctrinal points of the gCod practice. The Khrid yig gzhung gdon chen mo'i klad don bdud ngos 'dzin[28] classifies the various types of demons, delineates the psychological imbalance each personifies, and specifies meditational antidotes. The rDo rje tshig 'byed nges don rab gsal[29] by gShongs-chen outlines the SPNG path, distinguishes between meditation, action, and view, and relates each of these three factors to the storehouse consciousness (ālayavijñāna). The dGe sdig 'khrul

spong rgyu 'bras gsal ba'i don ston[30] discusses morality and the overriding importance of intention in the determination of wholesome and unwholesome deeds. The concept of 'usual awareness' (tha-mal gyi shes-pa) is also defined herein. The sTong nyid zlog sgom dmigs rdzongs chen mo[31] is concerned with the development of an understanding of emptiness (śūnyatā) to facilitate the offering of the body to the demons during the gCod meditation. The Phar phyin drug gyi nyams len rgyas bshad[32] discusses the practice of the six perfections (pāramitā), and identifies gCod as the optimal practice of the perfection of giving (dānapāramitā). A contribution of Nam-mkha' Legs-pa, the first member of the SPNG lineage after Thang-stong, is the Lam khyer nyer lnga,[33] which lists twenty-five errors in view and practice, and explains how to correct each. The brDa' bzhi brgyud pa'i ngo sprod zab gnas bka' rgya ma[34] discusses the storehouse consciousness in relation to the four classes of tantra[35] and to the yogic exercises connected to gCod.

Another group of texts which may be recognized within the SPNG are not concerned directly with the doctrinal points of the Vajrapada, but rather describe the elements of the practice of the system. The main meditation and liturgical guide is referred to by the generic title of Chog khrigs (lit. 'Arrangement of the Ceremony'). There are four versions of the text: extended, medium, condensed, and extremely condensed.[36] The Chog khrigs contains the liturgies for the taking of refuge, confession of misdeeds, visualizations, use of ritual instruments, and supplication to the lineage. The various elements of the ritual described by the Chogs-khrigs are the subject of a number of subsidiary commentaries which explain such topics as

the offering feast (gaṇacakra) to the Ḍākinīs; burnt offerings (homa); the location of an auspicious site to practice the SPNG; the removal of spiritual obstructions from the site; and the inspection and choice of the skull-cup.

The principal initiation (smin-byed dbang) for the SPNG is the Nam mkha' sgo 'byed[37] (lit. 'Opening the Door to the Sky'). This title is not exclusive to the SPNG as the same phrase appears in other traditions as well.[38] It might be remarked that this title in itself is an indication of the pre-Buddhist origins of gCod, in that access to the upper realms through transic or magical means is a common theme in Asian shamanism.[39]

The SPNG collection also contains subsidiary works which deal with the individual deities connected to the system. In particular, the various forms of the Ḍākinī, including Vajravārāhī, Vāramukha, Prajñāpāramitā, and the iconographical group of the Five Classes of Ḍākinīs (mkha'-'gro sde-lnga) are represented. The texts in this category fall into three generic groups: sādhana, propitiation (sevā), and initiation. Many of these works are by gShongs-chen, the first editor of the collection.

Another topic covered by many of the pieces in the collection is the yogic exercises which are said to develop the practitioner's ability to visualize. The gSung rdo rje'i khrid yig[40] describes a typical exercise of this sort which involves the psycho-physical breath (prāṇa), nerves (nāḍi), and semen (bindu). The stated aim of the exercise is the realization of the Enjoyment Body in its 'indestructible vocal aspect' (vakvajra saṁbhogakāya).

The most noteworthy work on philosophy is gShong-chen's

dBu ma'i lta mgur,[41] in which is discussed the much-debated issue of 'own-emptiness' (rang-stong) versus 'other-emptiness' (gzhan-stong) originally introduced by the Jo-nang-pas.[42] In that Shong-chen's position seems to be an early attempt to reconcile the two theories, the relation of this text to the development of the gzhan-stong doctrine in Tibet merits a full analysis.[43] However, the connection of this issue to the SPNG is uncertain.

An interesting piece is gShongs-chen's Phaṭ chos 'dzin pa kun gcod[44] which examines the seed-syllable phaṭ, a common mantric device of the gCod meditations, and its function in cutting off attachment and illusion. Another short text,[45] which is anonymous, presents a general outline of the SPNG in terms of standard Buddhist doctrine. Emphasis is placed on the identity of the demon with belief in the existence of a soul (ātmagrāha), and the identity of the Prajñāpāramitā with the skillful means to "cut off" the demon.

SP-1 includes the rJe grub thob chen po'i bka' srol gyi bla ma'i rnal 'byor gsang spyod snyan brgyud dang sbyar ba'i tshogs kyi 'phrin las rig 'dzin mkha' 'gro dgyes pa'i rol mo,[46] a guruyoga system by the 20th century writer Chos-kyi Blo-gros. Similarities in content and the lineage cited indicate that this system is connected to the SPNG, although there is no suggestion that it is descended from Thang-stong's vision of Vajravārāhī or the SPNG Vajrapada. It also differs from the guruyoga attributed to Thang-stong's vision of Vajradhara at Thar-pa-gling.[47] Rather, this text claims to represent Thang-stong's vision of the Indian Siddha Huṁkāra.[48] The meditation begins with a recitation of phaṭ and a blowing of the thigh-bone horn which is said to clear the mind of emotional obscurations

(*kleśa*). This is followed by an elaborate visualization of Thang-stong as the ultimate guru (*tsa-ba'i bla-ma*).[49] Then the practitioner offers his body to the maṇḍala of Buddhas and deities. The lineage invoked is that of the SPNG, but with the addition of figures from other gCod lineages,[50] notably Pha Dam-pa and Sras-thos sMyon-pa bSam-grub. Thus this system cannot be said to represent an exclusively direct transmission, as the successive transmission known to Chos-kyi Blo-gros has also been incorporated into the text. In addition, Nyi-zla bZang-po (who appears in many of Thang-stong's lineages but is otherwise missing in the SPNG material) is quoted herein, as is bKa'-bcu-pa Blo-gros rGyal-mtshan and several others of Thang-stong's Shangs-pa line. On the whole the text seems to draw from numerous traditions, which is in keeping with the eclectic style of the work of Chos-kyi Blo-gros.

In addition to the material related to the practice and theory of this system, there is included in the first portion of the collection a versified eulogistic biography of each member of the lineage through which the SPNG passed. Most of these biographies are said to be written by the disciple of the master under discussion, but there are also several autobiographies (*zhal gzung-ma*). That these short works vary considerably in meter and style lends credence to their authenticity as original works by the various members of the lineage.

Although the biographies rarely exceed ten pages, their information concerning the education and career of each figure is adequate to engender a general picture of the sectarian and doctrinal tendencies

of this lineage. Most of these teachers are said to have experienced Pure Visions during their lives. However, there is little mention of Discovered Treasures. Sectarian references are by and large to the Shangs-pas, the Dvags-po bKa'-brgyud-pas, the rNying-ma-pas, the Sa-skya lineages concerning Virūpa and Hevajra, and the Jo-nang-pas. The members of the SPNG line seem to have followed an eclectic career, much as did Thang-stong himself, and as early as the writing of gShong-schen there is an explicit reference to a non-sectarian (phyogs-med) orientation.[51]

References to specific teachers, monasteries, and centers of the lCags-zam sect are abundant. There is evidence of an institutionalized line of succession which carried the title of bsTan-'dzin (lit. 'Holder of the Teachings'), and of the installation of regents (rgyal-tshab). Thus there may be sufficient basis for working out the chronology of this lineage, despite the fact that the cyclic numbers (rab-byung) of the Tibetan calendar are rarely supplied.

Almost all of the members of the lineage made some contribution to the SPNG collection; several stand out as major editors and compilers. The history of the transmission of the SPNG can be reconstructed based on the evidence of the tables of contents (dkar-chag) to the collection. It is clear that the SPNG has been edited several times. By comparing the titles listed in the table of contents written by the first editor, gShongs-chen, with those listed in the current collection, we learn that many of the works included by gShongs-chen are now missing. Also, many of the texts in the present collection, including works written anterior to gShongs-chen, were not known to the latter and instead were inserted by later editors.

gShongs-chen's original table of contents listed 47 texts, of which approximately 31 are preserved in SP-1 and SP-2 (there is question about the identity of a few of the works whose present titles vary from their listing by gShongs-chen.)

Sub-colophons contained within the table of contents to the current editions indicate that the collection was re-edited by the seventh bsTan-'dzin, Ye-shes lHun-grub, who also interposed much new material not included by gShongs-chen. bsTan-'dzin summarizes the history of the SPNG, stating that the tradition had been oral and secret until gShongs-chen redacted the collection.[52] bsTan-'dzin also explains that some of the material from gShongs-chen's edition was no longer extant. It should be noted that several of the additions of bsTan-'dzin are by gShongs-chen, which raises the question of why they were not included by gShongs-chen himself.

bsTan-'dzin also interposed works of other masters of the tradition, both anterior and posterior to gShongs-chen. Six texts are from the tradition of one O-rgyan Yongs-grags of whom little is known since he is not part of the SPNG lineage. He wrote the biography of 'Khrul-zhig Yon-tan Grags-bzang under the pseudonym of Kusali. bsTan-'dzin asserts that O-rgyan Yongs-grag's interpretations of the SPNG deserve inclusion in the collection.[53] Other new material introduced by bsTan-'dzin includes one work by Sang-rgyas mChog-grub, and bsTan-'dzin's own compositions based on yet other traditions of the SPNG.[54]

After bsTan-'dzin's edition, SP-1 and SP-2 diverge. SP-1 interpolates other works into bsTan-'dzin's table of contents, including more works of gShongs-chen, a work by 'Jam-dbyangs

mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po, and several contributions of Chos-kyi Blo-gros. These entries are lacking in SP-2 with the exception of the entry by 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po.

After supplying the final colophon by bsTan-'dzin,[55] SP-1 and SP-2 list the contents of their respective addendas, which with few exceptions are entirely different, and were compiled by their modern editors. SP-2's addenda contains supplementary material on the SPNG by such writers as bsTan-'dzin and Si-tu Chos-kyi rGya-mtsho. SP-1's addenda consists of material concerning other, unrelated systems of meditation attributed to Thang-stong which were compiled by Chos-kyi Blo-gros.

Neither of the most recent editors of SP-1 and SP-2 have signed their names to the collection, but their identity may be ascertained on the basis of the following evidence: The lineage of the SPNG listed in both editions is the same until Si-tu Chos-kyi rGya-mtsho (1880-1925). The last biography in SP-2 is that of Zhi-ba'i Blo-gros, the teacher of Si-tu, and was set down by Si-tu's assistant dBang-bsdud rDo-rje. The last biography in SP-1 is that of Chos-kyi Blo-gros (1893-1959) and is an autobiography. Both collections contain a number of works at their conclusion by Chos-kyi Blo-gros and Si-tu respectively, and they are each the most recent authors represented in their respective collections.

Thus we may assume that the editor of SP-1 was Chos-kyi Blo-gros, and the editor of SP-2 was Si-tu. However it seems that although the major editorial work was directed by each of these well known figures, the publishing seems to have been supervised in both cases by a student. In the case of SP-1, we have first-hand knowledge

that it was published under the direction of Ri-ked Bya-btang-ba Grub-thob Rinpoche[56] after Chos-kyi Blo-gros's death. That Ri-ked contributed to the preparation of SP-1 is also indicated in the colophons of several of Chos-kyi Blo-gros's works, where it is stated that the work had been requested by Ri-ked.[57] In addition, some of the texts in the addenda to SP-1 were set down by Ri-ked according to the instructions of Chos-kyi Blo-gros.

That SP-2 was not finalized by Si-tu is understood from the following: Both SP-1 and SP-2 contain a biographical appendix (rnam-thar shal-skong).[58] Though they bear the same title, the two appendices differ in that SP-1's text contains the biography of four Lamas (sPang-stong Kun-bzang Tshe-dbang, Yong-'dzin Blo-bzang bsTan-'phel, bsTan-'dzin mKhyen-rab mThu-stobs, and 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po) and is written by Si-tu, whereas SP-2's text also includes a fifth biography (of Zhi-ba'i Blo-gros) and is written by dBang-bsdud rDo-rje.[59] The biography of Zhi-ba'i Blo-gros is presented in SP-1 in a separate work by Si-tu. SP-1 further contains a biography of Si-tu by dBang-bsdud rDo-rje, and another biographical appendix by Chos-kyi Blo-gros.

The information on the first four Lamas is basically the same in SP-1 and SP-2. Entire lines and phrases are duplicated, as is the introductory verse in full. However, Si-tu's appendix in SP-1 is more detailed. It appears that dBang-bsdud's text in SP-2 is a summary of Si-tu's original.[60] We may theorize that dBang-bsdud was familiar with Si-tu's appendix but did not have the original at hand when SP-2 was published, and so wrote it out to the best of his memory. This theory is supported by the fact that the title and the introductory

verse is reproduced precisely. Further, the biography of Zhi-ba'i Blo-gros by Si-tu in SP-1 is summarized in a similar fashion by dBang-bsdud in SP-2.

Thus it may be established that the last section of SP-2 was edited by dBang-bsdud. However it does not seem to be the case that dBang-bsdud took as much control over SP-2 as Ri-ked did over SP-1. This is indicated by the lineage listed in the main liturgy, the <u>Chog khrigs rgyas pa</u>, which in SP-1 goes down to Chos-kyi Blo-gros but in SP-2 goes down to Zhi-ba'i Blo-gros (Si-tu's teacher). It is the custom of a Tibetan editor to add the name of his teacher to the lineage list, but rarely his own. Thus the list in the <u>Chog khrigs rgyas pa</u> of SP-1 must have been edited by Ri-ked, and of SP-1 by Si-tu. dBang-bsdud evidently did not see fit to tamper with Si-tu's work by adding the latter's name to the lineage list. A further fact which minimizes dBang-bsdud's importance is that his own biography of Si-tu is not included in SP-2 although it is in SP-1. This further indicates that SP-2 for the most part was closed before Si-tu's death.

To summarize, SP-2 was completed earlier than SP-1, and therefore lacks the contributions of the most recent members of the lineage. However, each of the editions includes works that the other lacks. Si-tu brought bsTan-'dzin's second edition up to date. Si-tu was assisted by dBang-bsdud rDo-rje in the publication of SP-2. Some decades later, Chos-kyi Blo-gros and his student Ri-ked independently worked on bsTan-'dzin's edition. They were aware of Si-tu's work on the SPNG, included some of his compositions, and also added works by authors anterior to Si-tu which were not available to the latter. Chos-kyi Blo-gros even interposed works of gShongs-chen which were

unknown to all of the previous editors.[61] Finally, Chos-kyi Blo-gros added his own writings on the SPNG which of course were unavailable to Si-tu. However, the fact that Chos-kyi Blo-gros's SP-1 lacks some of the texts from SP-2 indicates either that he did not have access to that edition when compiling SP-1; or, that he had a specific reason for omitting these works, although no statement of this sort is made.

The lineage holders, editors, and contributors to the SPNG may be listed as follows:

<u>The SPNG Lineage</u>

(Yum-chen) Sher-phyin-ma (Prajñāpāramitā) - Dharma Body source of the SPNG

rDo-rje Phag-mo (Vajravārāhī) - Enjoyment Body source of the SPNG

Ma-gcig Lab-sgron - Emanation Body expositor of the SPNG

Thang-stong rGyal-po - Received direct transmission of the SPNG

('Jam-dbyangs) Nam-mkha' Legs-pa - Author of works on the SPNG, biographer of Thang-stong

(mKhas-grub) Shākya'i bShes-gnyen - Biographer of Nam-mkha' Legs-pa

(Pha-rgod) rGyal-mtshan dPal-bzang-po (Ras-sgom Chen-po) - Author of works on the SPNG, biographer of Shākya'i bShes-gnyen

(rJe-btsun) Bla-ma gShongs-chen (mKhas-btsun bsTan-pa'i rGyal-mtshan dPal-bzang-po) - First redactor of the SPNG, major contributor, biographer of Ras-sgom Chen-po

'Khrul-zhig Yon-tan Grags-bzang

(Pha-rgod rTogs-pa'i) Glang-mkhar-ba (Mang-thos)

(Bya-btang) Nor-bu rGya-mtsho

(Grub-dbang) rDo-rje dPal-'byor

gYa'-mtho Ring-pa (rNam-rgyal Tshe-'phel)

Ngag-dbang dKon-mchog (his biography not included in SP-1 or SP-2, but he is listed in the lineage of the <u>Chog-khrigs</u>)

Chu-bzang (Ngag-dbang 'Jam-dbyangs) Chos-'phel - Biographer of rDo-rje dPal-'byor

(Grub-rigs) Ngag-dbang Yongs-grags

(The 7th bsTan-'dzin) Ye-shes lHun-grub (dPal-ldan bDe-chen rNam-rol 'Chi-med Grub-pa'i dBang-phyug) - Second editor of the SPNG, author of works on the SPNG

(sPang-ston) Kun-bzang Tshe-dbang

(Yong-'dzin) Blo-bzang (bShad-sgrub) bsTan-'phel

(The 8th bsTan-'dzin) mKhyen-rab mThu-stobs

'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po (Mañjughoṣa) (1820-1892) - Author of works on the SPNG

(sPrang-po sKyabs-mgon) Zhi-ba'i Blo-gros (Kun-bzang 'Gyur-med) - Author of works on the SPNG

(The 10th Kaḥ-thog Si-tu) Chos-kyi rGya-mtsho (1880-1925) - Editor of SP-2, author of works on the SPNG, biographer of Kun-bzang Tshe-dbang, Blo-bzang bsTan-'phel, mKhyen-rab mThu-stobs, mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po, Zhi-ba'i Blo-gros

'Gyur-med 'Jam-dbyangs bsTan-'phel

('Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse) Chos-kyi Blo-gros (Padma Ye-shes rDo-rje) (1893-1959) - Editor of SP-1, author of works on the SPNG

Contributors to the SPNG not listed as lineage members

O-rgyan Yongs-grags - Biographer of 'Khrul-zhig Yon-tan Grags-bzang, author of works on the SPNG which were added to the collection by bsTan-'dzin Ye-shes lHun-grub

Zhu-chen Mahāpaṇḍita (Paṇḍe Tshul-khrims Rin-chen) - Author of works on the SPNG

Ngag-dbang bsTan-'dzin Phun-tshogs - Author of works on the SPNG

Thugs-rje gZhan-phan dPal-bzang - Author of works on the SPNG

Kun-gzigs Chos-kyi rGyal-mtshan - Author of works on the SPNG

Sangs-rgyas Phun-tshogs - Author of works on the SPNG

Sangs-rgyas mChog-grub - Author of works on the SPNG, biographer of Glang-mkhar-ba

(Kun-bzang) dBang-bsdud rDo-rje - Assisted Si-tu in the editing of SP-2, biographer of Si-tu

(Grub-thob Rin-po-che) Ri-ked Bya-btang-ba (Thugs-rje dPal) (c. 1891-) - Assisted in the editing of SP-1.

Despite the fact that so little, if any, of the material in the SPNG collection is authored by Thang-stong, the system as a whole is attributed to his visionary instruction by Vajravārāhī at Rameśvara. However, the visionary core text of the SPNG gives no indication that it is the teaching which occurred at Rameśvara, or that Thang-stong had anything to do with its composition. Even if we take into account the fact that the nature of the visionary document genre requires that its human author not be mentioned, there still remain certain questions concerning the precise connection of Thang-stong's vision with this core text, and with the SPNG as a whole. In particular, it is unclear why the divine source of the core text is listed with the general term Ḍākinī, and not specified to be Vajravārāhī.

We have indicated above that the SPNG is said to have been codified first by gShongs-chen, who is four steps removed from Thang-stong in the lineage. Whatever Thang-stong's work on the SPNG may have been, we are told that it was in oral form only.

A salient passage in the Nam mkha' sgo 'byed (the initiation text for the SPNG) suggests that Nam-mkha' Legs-pa, the first member of the lineage after Thang-stong and presumably the latter's personal disciple, had a more important role in the formation of the SPNG than is generally indicated in this literature. The passage in question is a description of the history of the SPNG's initiation tradition. This tradition is traced to Ma-gcig Lab-sgron. After some details of her life and visionary experiences are recounted, Thang-stong's visionary receipt of the SPNG from Ma-gcig is mentioned briefly.

But the emphasis is clearly on Nam-mkha' Legs-pa, who is identified as the king of gCod practitioners (gcod-mkhan gyi rgyal-po) and as the father of the Whispered Lineage (snyan-brgyud). The latter term is both a general description of a type of transmission of a teaching, and a part of the title of the SPNG. Further, Nam-mkha' Legs-pa is said to be the father of a lineage transmitted to only one disciple (cig-brgyud), of which Śākya mTshan-can is the son, Pha-rgod rTog-pa'i rGyal-po rGyal-mtshan dPal-bzang-po is the grandson, and gShongs-chen is the great-grandson. After being transmitted to gShongs-chen, the seal of secrecy was lifted and the teachings were made accessible to a wider audience.[62]

The familial titles of father, son, etc., are metaphors for the relationship between teacher and disciple. The fact that the figures listed in this lineage correspond precisely to those listed elsewhere for the SPNG is significant. The implication of this passage is that the founder of the SPNG tradition is not Thang-stong but Nam-mkha' Legs-pa.

There is also a difficulty in establishing the relationship of Thang-stong and Nam-mkha' Legs-pa to each other. The biography of Nam-mkha' Legs-pa included in the SPNG does not mention Thang-stong, although several other teachers are listed. Nor do we find the name of Nam-mkha' Legs-pa in any of the biographies of Thang-stong.[63] Yet we would assume that Nam-mkha' Legs-pa was Thang-stong's personal disciple, since they are contiguous in the lineage, and since the former wrote the latter's biography B-2, as did the other members of the SPNG lineage for their respective teachers. The possibility that Thang-stong and Nam-mkha' Legs-pa were not contemporaries but

were teacher and disciple only in the visionary sense is precluded by a statement that indicates that Kun-dga' Grol-mchog (1507-1566) was contemporaneous with Nam-mkha' Legs-pa.[64]

Lacking further information about Nam-mkha' Legs-pa, the nature of his role as the father of the Whispered Lineage remains an unsolved question. However the isolated passage which places him in this position is not sufficient evidence to discount categorically the general attribution of the SPNG to Thang-stong.

In the final analysis, the SPNG is a multi-layered collection that is the joint effort of a lineage which spanned close to 500 years. The material in the collection was never static or finalized; rather, the lineage members were actively involved in elucidating and modifying the system. They introduced new material based on their personal experience, and in some cases, on their own visions. This course of development is in keeping with the specification of the teaching as a Whispered Lineage, a term which underscores the predominantly oral and adaptable nature of the teaching itself.

Notes

1. See, for example, Mircea Eliade, Shamanism - Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy, p. 62 seq., concerning Siberian shamans who witness their dismemberment by mythical beings, which leads to revelation and transcendence.

2. See dPa'-bo gTsug-lag, mKhas pa'i bka' ston, vol. 3, pp. 763-4; also George Roerich, Blue Annals, p. 980.

3. As in Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas, ed., gCod kyi tshogs les yon tan kun 'byung gsungs rgyun 'khrul med ltar bkod pa bzhugs pa'i dpu phyogs lags so, p. 21 seq. See also Sur-mang bsTan-'dzin rNam-rgyal, gCod kyi tshugs las yon tan kun ldan gyi dmigs rim bla ma'i gsung rgyun gyi zin bris shel dkar me long, p. 6b, for a description of the visualization of this mantra during the performance of gCod.

4. dPa'-bo gTsug-lag, mKhas pa'i bka' ston, vol. 3, p. 763.

5. Gos Lo-tsa-ba (Roerich, Blue Annals, p. 981) quotes the Prajñāpāramitā-sañcayagāthā as the source of this statement.

6. The Jātaka story of the Bodhisattva's gift of his own body to a hungry tigress well illustrates this notion, as in Hendrik Kern, ed., Āryaśūra's Jātakamālā, p. 1 seq.; the story of the rabbit, p. 33 seq., expresses the same idea. See Har Dayal, The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature, p. 181 seq.

7. Ngag-dbang bsTan-'dzin Nor-bu rDza-spru, gCod yul nyon mongs zhi byed kyi bka' gter bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar byin rlabs gter mtsho (abbr. gCod yul nyon mongs), pp. 10-11. This figure is said to be the brāhmin Āryadeva, a tantric practitioner, and not the famed student of Nāgārjuna. However there are said to be others who do identify him with the Mādhyamika thinker.

8. gCod yul nyon mongs, pp. 4-5. Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas, Shes bya kun khyab mdzod, vol. 4. p. 160, lists the four lines as Gu-ru'i gSang-gcod; bKa'-brgyud Don-gcod; Dam-pa'i Zhi-byed; and Nā-ro'i gSang-spyod.

9. A related tradition from the Klong chen snying thig has been translated by Kazi Dawa Samdup, in W. Y. Evans Wentz, ed., Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines, p. 301 seq. The Discovered Treasure gCod traditions, such as those of Ratna Gling-pa, Sangs-rgyas Gling-pa, and rGod-ldem-can, are also considered to be Gu-ru'i 'Khrul-gcod.

10. Zhi-byed is often treated separately, as in the Blue Annals, where it is discussed in Chapter 12 and gCod is the subject of Chapter 13.

11. According to the Blue Annals, p. 982, pho-gcod was not propogated by Ma-gcig but by sKyo bSod-nams Bla-ma and Ram-po Ser-po. However, the former was Ma-gcig's teacher, so her involvement in this line is plausible.

12. See gCod yul nyon mongs throughout for a description of these lineages.

13. B-1, p. 49.

14. CM-1-c, p. 608.

15. B-1, pp. 80-81. The Lama had just give Thang-stong a Hevajra initiation.

16. B-1, p. 90.

17. B-1, p. 123 seq.

18. B-2, p. 46.

19. B-1, p. 164.

20. B-1, p. 16.

21. B-2, p. 46.

22. B-1, p. 279. Nam mkha' sgo byed is the title of the main initiation for the SPNG, but the phrase can also refer to other practices in Tibetan Buddhism. See n. 38 below.

23. Including works on Thang-stong's guruyoga stemming from a vision of Vajradhara; the 'Chi med dpal ster; his vision of Virūpa and Seng-zhal-can; and his vision of Mahākāla.

24. B-1, p. 178.

25. B-2, p. 46.

26. SP-1, vol. 1, text Ja = SP-2, text Za.

27. It should be noted however that the same phrase preceeds several other texts in the SPNG (for example, the original table of contents by gShongs-chen, and the medium Chog-khrigs) which clearly are not considered to be part of the visionary core. The free use of the phrase to introduce texts in the SPNG may probably be explained as a reminder, or verbal emblem, of the ultimately divine inspiration of the SPNG as a whole. That the Vajrapada specifically represents the actual words of the Ḍākinī is indicated in the commentary to it by gShongs-chen, the rDo rje'i tshig 'byed nges don rab gsal, in SP-1, vol. 1, p. 299, where it is stated that the Vajrapada is "The secret words of the Ḍākinī, the profound whispered lineage of the utterance

of that which penetrates the secret treasury of the mind of the Venerable Vajra Queen."

28. SP-1, vol. 1, text Da = SP-2, text La.

29. SP-1, vol. 1, text Ta = SP-2, text Ya.

30. SP-1, vol. 1, text Tha = SP-2, text Ra.

31. SP-1, vol. 1, text Pha = SP-2, text Ha.

32. SP-1, vol. 1, text Na = SP-2, text Sha.

33. SP-1, vol. 2, text Ti = SP-2, text Yi.

34. SP-1, vol. 2, text 'A = SP-2, text Nyi.

35. See p. 85 seq. above.

36. SP-1, vol. 1, texts Ka, Kha, Nga, Ca = SP-2, vol. 1, texts Ma, Tsa, Dza, Wa.

37. SP-2, vol. 2, text Ya = SP-2, text Ti. According to dKar-chag, p. 571, parts of this tradition may be ascribed to the section on experience (klong-sde) in the Atiyoga.

38. Nam-mkha' sgo-byed refers specifically to the release of the consciousness (vijñāna) during the performance of transference of consciousness ('pho-ba) yoga. This practice is generally part of the gCod rite. See Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas, Lus mchog sbyin gyi zin bris mdor bsdud kun dga' skyed tshal, p. 5b seq.

39. See R. A. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, pp. 211 seq; 225.

40. SP-1, vol. 2, text Tsha = SP-2, text Gi.

41. SP-1, vol. 3, text Pa.

42. See p. 50 above, n. 5.

43. Translation and analysis of the text in progress, by this writer.

44. SP-1, vol. 2, text Khi = SP-2, text Tsi.

45. SP-2, vol. 2, text U.

46. SP-1, vol. 4, text Dza.

47. See p. 210 seq. below.

48. This visionary incident mentioned in B-1, p. 223. While at Kong-po rGya-la, Thang-stong is said to have heard a verse, which is the same as that attributed to Hūṃkāra by Chos-kyi Blo-gros in SP-1, vol. 4, text Dza. B-1 attributes the verse to rNal-'byor sTag-sham-can who

turned into Che-mchog Heruka, who turned into Hūṁkāra later on in the vision. The connection of this vision to the SPNG is not explicitly made by B-1. However, directly after the vision occurred, Thang-stong is said to have asked the crowd who had gathered if there were any gCod practitioners present.

49. P. 44.

50. Lineages listed on p. 44 seq.

51. SP-1, vol. 1, p. 97. This may be an early instance of the Ris-med movement.

52. SP-1, vol. 1, p. 8 = SP-2, vol. 1, p. 2: "...rnams las grub dbang man chad kyi bla ma'i rnam thar zhal gsung ma dang/ bla ma phyi ma phyi mas mdzad pa ci rigs yod ching/ rdo rje tshig rkang brgyud pa gong mas mdzad pa'i yi ge le tshan gsum bcas gong du smos pa ltar dang/ dbang spyi'i sngon 'gro/ sa dmigs dang chu dmigs brtag thabs gnyis nyer mkho'i slad gzhan nas blang ba yin nam snyam zhing/ de ma gtogs ngar brjod pa rnams yab rje grub dbang spyi mas nas 'jam dbyangs mkhas btsun chen po'i bar snyan nas snyan du brgyud pa'i zab don 'jam dbyangs chen pos yi ge'i lam du snang bar mdzad pa byin rlabs kyi sprin phung gyo ba 'ba' zhig yin no//"

53. SP-1, vol. 1, p. 10: "O rgyan yongs grags gi yig char brgyud pa 'di bas gtsigs cher mi mdzad kyang legs par bzhad po'i cha mang du snang phyir dkyus su sdebs pa/"

54. For example, SP-1, text Tha = SP-2, text Ju.

55. SP-1, vol. 1, p. 13 = SP-2, vol. 1, p. 2: "ces ba'ang bstan 'dzin chos rje'i mtshan gyi byin gyis brlabs pa bstan 'dzin ye shes lhun grub kyis blo mtsho las so/ Maṅgalaṁ/"

56. Currently in Bhutan. His name alternately spelled Ri-ked, Ri-rked, Ri-khed and Ri-bkod. The manuscript of SP-1, which became the prototype for the edition published in Thimphu, 1976, is in Ri-ked's possession.

57. The last text in the biographical section or SP-1 is Wa, which was "requested" by Ri-bkod Bya-btang-ba. A similar statement is made in SP-1, vol. 4, p. 626.

58. There is more than a bit of confusion here, as both SP-1 and SP-2's first table of contents omit mention of bsTan-'dzin Ye-shes lHun-grub's biography, and proceed to number the following works accordingly. However, the numbering system is quickly corrected by a further error in both collections, but in different ways--in the case of SP-1, the listing for the next text, the biographical appendix, is split into two texts, erroneously, so that the actual title is listed as text Ba, and a subtitle of the text consisting of the names of the personages discussed, is listed as Ma. Actually the whole text is Ma. Thus the

numbering system resumes correctly. In the case of SP-2, text number Na, the biography of gYa'-mtho Ring-pa, though listed in the table of contents is actually missing, and the next text is actually labelled Na (although listed in the table of contents as Pa). The next two texts are also erroneously numbered, but the mistake is compensated by the failure in the table of contents to mention bsTan-'dzin Ye-shes lHun-grub's biography, which is actually text Pha. Thus the biographical appendix in question, listed in SP-1's table of contents as Ba and Ma, is actually numbered Ma, and in SP-2 is correctly numbered Ba.

59. SP-2 does include Si-tu's original appendix at the end of vol. 2, as text Hu. This text is a variant of SP-1's Ma. It bears a different title, and has several minor differences in spelling and grammatical particles.

60. Cf. statement in SP-2, vol. 1, p. 23: "Yong 'dzin nas kyang bris zhig par sda sor bka' gnang ba bzhin/ slad nas smin grol gyi sgo 'phar 'byed pa'i kaḥ thog gi dgon gleng rnal 'byor spyod pa kun bzang dbang bsdud rdo rjes sbyar ba.../"

61. Including gShogs-chen's noteworthy dBu ma lta mgur mentioned above.

62. SP-1, vol. 2, text Ya, p. 120 seq.

63. See p. 49 above.

64. Indicated in a colophon to the biography of Pha-rgod Ras-sgom Chen-po. See SP-1, vol. 1, p. 84, lines 2-3.

The Shangs-pa Direct Transmission

The only prose by Thang-stong that is known to have survived concerns the philosophical and yogic doctrines of the Shangs-pa bKa'-brgyud sect of Tibetan Buddhism. In the 19th century Blo-gsal bsTan-skyong and Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas took a special interest in the Shangs-pa sect and were instrumental in reviving its study.[1] We learn from their writings that there were five traditions of the Shangs teachings, which stemmed from five Indian teachers: Niguma, Sukhasiddhi, Maitripa, Abhaya, and Rāhula.[2] Of the five, the teachings of Niguma predominated in the sect.

Niguma is alternately called the sister or the wife of the Indian Siddha Nāropa.[3] She is considered to have been an accomplished yoginī. Her systems of meditation, as preserved by the Shangs-pas, closely parallel the systems of Nāropa. She also authored original doctrinal works.

A section in Kong-sprul's voluminous gDams ngag mdzod is currently one of the main sources for the study of the Shangs-pa sect. That Thang-stong's writings on the teachings of Niguma are included in that section demonstrates the major position Thang-stong has in this school.

Thang-stong's role in the Shangs-pa sect is further understood from the traditional histories which specify that the doctrines of Niguma were transmitted in three types of lineages.[4] The first is the successive lineage (ring-brgyud) which was brought to Tibet by Khyung-po rNal-'byor in the 11th century.[5] This line continued as a 'lineage transmitted to one disciple only' (cig-brgyud) down to the

seventh "jewel" Sang-rgyas sTon-pa. After the seventh transmission the line broadened and later branched into several parallel lineages which more recently converged again. The second lineage is the direct transmission (nye-brgyud), by which is meant the teachings based on Thang-stong's vision of Niguma. The third is the 'very direct transmission' (shin-du nye-brgyud) which refers to the teachings of Kun-dga' Grol-mchog based on his vision of Niguma. The third line was in turn transmitted to the renown scholar Tāranātha.

Thang-stong's initial contact with this sect was to study the Shangs-pa successive transmission under Byang-sems sByin-pa bZang-po. His topics of study are listed as the Chos-drug, Phyag-chen Ga'u-ma, Lam-'khyer-gsum, 'Chi-med 'Chugs-med, mKha'-spyod dKar-dmar, and Bla-ma mGon-po dByer-med.[6] These systems stemmed from gTsang-ma Shangs-ston (1234-1309), the founder of the 'Jag-chung Monastery. Thang-stong is said to have studied the 'Jag lineage with his teacher bKa'-lnga-pa dPal-'byor Shes-rab as well.[7] We learn in a biography of the Shangs-pa master Mus-chen Nam-mkha' rNal-'byor that Thang-stong also studied with this figure, as did Thang-stong's teacher bKa'-lnga-pa.[8] Further, B-4 reports Thang-stong's receipt of the Shangs successive transmission from Bla-ma rDo-rje gZhon-nu.[9]

Thang-stong's vision of Niguma and receipt of the direct transmission is related in detail in B-1: The vision occurred immediately after his period of study with Byang-sems sByin-pa bZang-po, when Thang-stong went into retreat at Bas-mtha'. Niguma appeared to him in her "deathless rainbow body," and granted him four initiations into the great precious maṇḍala (mchog-gi dkyil-'khor chen-por dbang-bzhi). It is also said that she instructed Thang-stong

in several Vajrapadas, one of which concerned the white and the red Khecarī (mkha'-spyod). B-1 asserts that when Thang-stong practiced these systems he gained the power to magically duplicate his body and to know the thoughts of others.[10]

B-3, the biography of Thang-stong preserved by the Shangs-pa sect, seems to represent a different tradition by stating that Thang-stong had three separate visions of Niguma. B-3 also states that Thang-stong later set the revealed instructions (gdams-ngag) into writing.

Kong-sprul, in his summary of Thang-stong's role in the Shangs-pa sect, elaborates on the tradition that Thang-stong had three visions of Niguma.[12] According to Kong-sprul, the first was a vision at Ri-bo-che,[13] the second was a receipt of visionary initiations at mDog-smad Srin-rdzong, and the third was a receipt of the precepts of Khecarī in a non-verbal communication. Thang-stong's works on these subjects are preserved in the gDam ngag mdzod with the exception of that concerning Khecarī. This omission is curious since the latter subject is identified both in B-1 and Kong-sprul's account.

The Shangs-pa sect, like the bKa'-brgyud sects stemming from Nāropa, cite the Mahāmudrā as the philosophical and meditational cornerstone of the New Tantras.[14] The original exponents of this tradition were the Indian Mahāsiddhas such as Saraha, Tilopa, and Maitripa, in addition to Nāropa and Niguma. The philosophy of the Mahāmudrā can be characterized as a synthesis of the Prajñāpāramitā doctrines of non-duality and the co-emergence of form and emptiness, with the Yogācāra concepts of the storehouse consciousness and the

Tathāgata-embryo.[15] The tradition developed out of an iconoclastic movement that rejected the ritual and academic institutions of late Indian Buddhism. The emphasis was on the notion of "non-meditation" to allow the emergence of what was said to be the natural luminousity of mind.

The meditational practices of the Shangs-pa sect are primarily tantric and yogic in nature, involving the development of the psychic nerves (rtsa), breath (rlung), and essential energy (thig-le) in order to enhance the realization of the Mahāmudrā. The goal is to attain mastery over worldly phenomena and death. The main system of meditation is known as the Six Teachings (chos-drug). The first of the six, the yogic production of psycho-physical heat (gtum-mo), is the basis (thabs-lam) for the other five, namely: the meditative production of the illusion-body (sgyu-lus) the control of the dream state (rmi-lam); the experience of the clear light ('od-gsal); the transference of consciousness to higher realms ('pho-ba); and the recognition of the intermediate state after death (bar-do). The system of the Six Teachings has received considerable attention in Western literature as it is emphasized in many of the Tibetan traditions. The system is not exclusive to Niguma. It was propagated widely by the bKa-brgyud lineages stemming from Nāropa,[16] and was also adopted by the dGe-lugs-pas.[17]

The traditional analyses of the various systems attributed to Niguma employ the simile of the tree. As elaborated by 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po, the Six Teachings are like the roots of the tree; the Mahāmudrā Amulet-box Teachings (Phyag-chen Ga'u-ma) are like the stem; the branches are the Three Carry-over Practices

(Lam-khyer gSum); the flower is the Practice of the Red and the White Khecarī (mKha'-spyod dKar-mar); and the fruit is the Deathlessness of Body and Mind (Lus-sems 'Chi-med). In addition, the cycle of the six-armed Mahākāla (Ye-shes mGon-po) is counted as one of Niguma's subsidiary systems.[18]

Thang-stong's version of Niguma's teachings closely follows the structure of this format. His innovations consist primarily of variations in the imagery and details of the visualization techniques.

The following represents the available literature on Thang-stong's Shangs-pa teachings:

Sh-1: (no title).

By Thang-stong rGyal-po.

Published in Shangs pa mgur mtsho, ed. Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas, in gDams ngag mdzod, vol. 8, pp. 811-815.

a) (No title) (p. 811).

Content: The song of the Ḍākinīs eulogizing the five names of Thang-stong. = B-1, pp. 74-75.

Translated above, p. 37.

b) mKhas btsun bde legs pa la rang grol phyag rgya chen po'i zhal gdams rdo rje'i dbyangs su bsnyan pa (p. 812).

Content: Song on the Mahāmudrā and related topics, sung for mKhas-btsun bDe-legs-pa.

c) Sems 'chi med rang grol gyi rdo rje'i mgur (p. 814).

Content: A 'vajra-song' on the deathlessness of body and mind. Related to Sh-3-c.

Translated by Matthew Kapstein, "The Shangs-pa Teachings of Deathlessness."

That these three texts are labelled as vajra-songs (rdo-rje

dbyangs, or rdo-rje'i mgur) indicates their status as core texts, akin to the Vajrapada genre. However there is no explicit reference to the visionary instruction of Niguma and therefore no basis for identifying them as visionary documents. These songs are best characterized as inspired poetry, based on visionary and meditative experience.

Sh-2: Ye shes mkha' 'gro ni gu ma'i chos drug gi khrid yig gnad yig snying po kun 'dus.

By Thang-stong rGyal-po.

Published in gDams ngag mdzod, vol. 8, pp. 275-307.

Colophon translated: "This condensed essential instruction on the precepts of Nigu's Six Teachings, is a compilation of all the guru's precepts, composed by Madman of the Empty Land (= Thang-stong) (based) on his realizations while practicing at the meditation hut Zhal-dkar lHa-gdong at Thar-pa-gling, completed at the precious site of Ri-bo-che, in the tiger year, 10th day of the 7th month, at the time when the Ḍākinīs have gathered. The scribe was bKa'-bcu-pa Blo-gros rGyal-mtshan."

Content: Instructions on the practice of the six Teachings:
1. The Efficacious Path, the Self-Ignition of Bliss-Heat (Thabs-lam bDe-drod Rang-'bar) (p. 279)
2. The Illusory Body, the Self-Deliverance from Attachment and Hatred (sGyu-lus Chags-sdang Rang-grol) (p. 285)
3. The Dream, the Self-Purification of Hallucinations (rMi-lam Nying-'khrul Rang-dag) (p. 289)
4. The Clear Light, the Self-Awakening from Stupidity ('Od-gsal gTi-mug Rang-sangs) (p. 295)
5. Transference, the Buddhahood of Mother-Like Sentient Beings ('Pho-ba Ma-bsgoms Sang-rgyas) (p. 296)
6. The Intermediate State, the Saṁbhogakāya of the Jina (Bar-do rGyal-ba Longs-sku) (p. 298).

Lineage (pp. 278-279):

(Sang-rgyas) rDo-rje-'chang (Vajradhara)
(mKha'-'gro) Niguma
(Grub-thob) Khyung-po rNal-'byor
(rMog-lcog) Rin-chen brTson-'grus
(mNyam-med) sKyer-sgang-pa
(Bla-ma) Sang-rgyas gNyan-ston
(Chos-rje) Sangs-rgyas sTon-pa
(mKhas-grub) Shangs-ston Chos-rje
(rGyal-ba) Mus-pa Chen-po

(Bla-ma) rDo-rje gZhon-nu
(mTshan-ldan) Nam-mkha rNal-'byor
Byang-sems sByin-pa bZang-po
(Grub-thob) brTson-'grus bZang-po (= Thang-stong)

(continued by Kong-sprul in Ni-gu'i brgyud 'debs):

(Mang-mkhar dGon-gsar brgyud-'dzin) Blo-gros rGyal-mtshan
mKhas-grub dPal-ldan Dar-po of Pu-rong
rJe-btsun bSon-nams rTse-mo of Zhe-dgon
bsKal-bzang 'Gyur-med bDe-chen of Grub-ri Ewaṁ dGa'-'khyil
Bla-brang rDzong-pa mKhan-chen Ngag-dbang Chos-grags
'Jam-dbyangs bSod-nams rGyal-mtshan of dGe-'phel Chos-kyi Pho-brang
Ngag-dbang bsTan-pa Dar-rgyas of gSang-sngags-bDe-chen
Mang-thos bSod-nams Chos-'phel of sGro-mo-lung dBen-pa
Kun-dga' Legs-pa'i 'Byung-gnas of bKra-shis Chos-sde
'Jam-dbyangs bSod-nams dPal-bzang of mDog Zhe-dgon
bSam-rdzong Chos-sde Pho-brang-pa 'Phags-mchog Chos-nyid Ye-shes
Ye-shes rGyal-mchog of Mus
Sa-skya Chos-grwa Chen-po Yongs-'dzin Ma-ti
'Jam-mgon rDo-rje Rin-chen of rDo-rje-brag rDzong
'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po
Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas

The first phrase in the title to each of the Six Teachings listed above is a standard term which was appropriated by Thang-stong. The second two phrases are descriptive of the visualization techniques prescribed, and seem to be peculiar to Thang-stong's version. Thang-stong's remarks are abbreviated and technical, and assume prior knowledge of the Six Teachings on the part of the reader. In his discussion of these topics, Thang-stong follows the format that is laid out in the successive transmission literature of the Six Teachings, but offers special techniques and tips based on his personal experiences.

Sh-3: (no title)

By Thang-stong rGyal-po.

Published in gDams ngag mdzod, vol. 8, pp. 308-325.

a) Ni gu'i yan lag phyag chen ga'u ma'i khrid (p. 308).

Colophon translated: "This concise practice of the Mahāmudrā Amulet

Box teachings which is the instruction on the philosophy of the teaching cycle of Nying-khu's subsidiary teachings, was composed by Madman of the Empty Land at the precious site of glorious Ri-bo-che, in accordance with his own experience. The scribe was bKa'-bcu-pa Blo-gros rGyal-mtshan."

Content: Description of the Mahāmudrā. Special preliminary practices (p. 308); notes on the 'self liberation from the four defects' (skyon-bzhi rang-grol) by which the practitioner realizes that he is already enlightened and unified with the Mahāmudrā (p. 312); discussion of the 'self-revealed zenith body' (mthar-thugs sku-ba'i rang-shar) through which the practitioner realizes that he is already united with the three bodies (trikāya) (p. 313).

b) Ni gu'i yan lag lam khyer gsum gyi khrid (p. 314).

Colophon translated: "These precepts on the unmistaken practice of Nying-khu's subsidiary teachings of 'carrying the guru onto the path,' 'carrying the chosen deity onto the path,' and 'carrying appearance onto the path,' were also composed by Madman of the Empty Land, at the precious site of Ri-bo-che, based on his own experience. The scribe was bKa'-bcu-pa Blo-gros rGyal-mtshan."

Content: Discussion of the Three Carry-over Practices (lam-khyer gsum), which involve visualization of all appearances as being inseparable from the guru (bla-ma lam-du khyer-ba) (p. 314); as being inseparable from the chosen deity (yi-dam lam-du khyer-ba) (p. 316); and as being illusion (sgyu-ma lam-du khyer-ba) (p. 318). Iconography according to the Cakrasaṃvara-tantra, in addition to a five-fold scheme stemming from the Rin chen rgya mtsho rgyud.[20] All appearances (snang-pa), sounds (sgra-grags), and thoughts (dran-rtog) are stated to be equivalent to those of the guru or chosen deity.[21]

Statement (p. 319) advising the student to consult the notes (yig-cha) of previous lineage holders.

c) Ni gu'i yan lag lus sems 'chi med kyi khrid (p. 319).

Colophon translated: "The clear visualization steps of the unmistaken and deathless state from the subsidiary cycle of Nying-khu's teachings were also composed by Madman of the Empty Land, after his meditative experiences according to the words of the Ḍākinī, at the precious site of Ri-bo-che, in the tiger year, from the 8th day of the 6th month, to the 15th day of the 7th month, (and includes) all the practices of the main (teachings) of Nying-khu along with the subsidiary teachings (= Sh-2 and Sh-3). The scribe was bKa'-bcu-pa Blo-gros rGyal-mtshan."

Content: Discussion of the theoretical impossibility of the death of either the physical body or the body of the propensities (vāsanā).[22] Discussion of the deathlessness of mind. Techniques to realize these

points through visualization of Cakrasaṁvara as-self with consort Vajravārāhī.[23]

Translated by Matthew Kapstein, "The Shangs-pa Teachings of Deathlessness."

The subjects discussed by Thang-stong in Sh-2 and Sh-3 represent some of the most interesting theories of Tibetan Buddhism. In brief, the concept of the immanence of the enlightened consciousness in the phenomenal world that is expressed in these texts has its roots in the Mādhyamika equation of Saṁsāra and Nirvāṇa, and in the theory of the Tathāgata-embryo. The Three Carry-over Practices constitute a practical application of these theories, by which the image of the enlightened realm is superimposed directly onto the experience of the mundane.

That the textual affiliation of Sh-2 and Sh-3 is to the Cakrasaṁvaratantra is understood from internal statements throughout these works. It is explicitly stated that initiation into the Cakrasaṁvara maṇḍala is a mandatory prerequisite for the practice of the Six Teachings of Niguma.[24] This affiliation is further evidenced by the frequent statements concerning the visualization of the guru as Cakrasaṁvara, the practitioner as Cakrasaṁvara, or the practitioner as Cakrasaṁvara with consort Vajravārāhī. The iconographic form of the Cakrasaṁvara of Thang-stong's system is white and has two hands holding vajra and bell. Other icons to be visualized in this system are Vajradhara and Vajrayoginī, both of whom are also from the Cakrasaṁvara cycle. It may be noted that the Six Teachings of Nāropa are also linked to this tantric cycle, with the variation that the Nāropa system involves the visualization of

the Ḍākinī, as either Vajrayoginī or Vajravārāhī, without the Cakrasaṃvara figure.[25]

Sh-2 and Sh-3 are of special interest in that they constitute the only known examples of Thang-stong's prose writing. The literary genre of these two texts is a combination of the revelatory and the exegetical modes. The subject of discussion is the author's visionary experience, but it is expressed in the standard Tibetan exegetical format of outline with comments. A curious aspect of this merging is that the successive lineage is invoked, despite the fact that the teaching is defined to be the direct transmission from Niguma to Thag-stong. That the reader is on several occasions referred to the successive transmission literature on Niguma's systems is further evidence of Thang-stong's assimilation of the canonical material in his visionary system. It is probably more accurate to describe these texts as being based on the direct transmission, than to follow the traditional analysis which labels the system as the direct transmission itself. A significant point which underlines the distance of these texts from visionary document status is the colophons' use of the verb 'composed' (sbyar-ba) to indicate Thang-stong's authorship, a term which never describes the formation of a visionary document.

Sh-2 and Sh-3 cite the Vajrapadas of Niguma,[26] which probably refers to the elusive Vajrapadas of the Shangs-pa lineage.[27] It will be recalled that B-1's account of Thang-stong's vision included mention of a transmission of the Vajrapada ,[28] from which we might infer that there was a special visionary document for Thang-stong's ststem. However none of the extant texts of this tradition indicate

the existence of such a text. Although Sh-3-c is based in its argument on the vajra song of Sh-1-c, this is not sufficient evidence to establish the status of the latter as a visionary document.

Although included in the gDams ngag mdzod as a part of Sh-3, the following text deals with a Shangs-pa tradition independent of Sh-2 and Sh-3:

Sh-4: Nying khu'i yan lag phyag drug ye shes mgon po'i khrid.

By Thang-stong rGyal-po.

Published in gDams ngag mdzod, vol. 8, pp. 325-332.

Colophon translated: "These precepts for accomplishing the Indivisibility of Guru and Protector, a subsidiary of Ñying-khu's cycle of teachings, was composed by Madman of the Empty Country, in accordance with his own experience, at the great site of Ri-bo-che. The scribe was bKa'-bcu-pa Blo-gros rGyal-mtshan."

Content: Description of the visualization system of the six-armed Mahākāla in-front, and of a multi-colored Vajrasattva as-self. Instructions for visualizing the same six-armed Mahākāla as black, and as other colors. General description of the principles by which alternate iconographical details may be substituted.

Lineage:

Vajradhara
Śabari
Maitripa
Rāhula
Khyung-po rNal-'byor
Rin-chen brTson-'grus
sKyer-sgang-pa
Sangs-rgyas gNyan-ston
Sang-rgyas sTon-pa
Shangs-ston
Mus-chen rGyal-mtshan dPal-bzang
mKhas-grub rDo-rje gZhon-nu
Nam-mkha'i rNal-'byor
Byang-sems sByin-pa bZang-po
Thang-stong rGyal-po

The editors of the gDams ngag mdzod would have it that Sh-4

is a chapter of Sh-3.[29] However, although the colophon of Sh-4 indicates that the text was written under similar circumstances as was Sh-3, it appears from the colophon of Sh-3-c that Sh-3-a, -b, and -c were composed as a unit during a single period. The colophon of Sh-4 does not attribute its composition to that same period.

Further, the content of Sh-4 can be demonstrated to be disassociated from Sh-3-a, -b, and -c. Despite the fact that both the title and colophon of Sh-4 place it in the cycle of the teachings of Niguma, the lineage listed within does not include Niguma. The lineage of Sh-4 is traced to Maitripa and Rāhula, who represent two of the other sources of the Shangs-pa sect. Moreover, the first human member of the Sh-4 lineage is not any of the five sources of the Shangs-pas but is the Indian Siddha Śabari. There is also a quote attributed to Śabari at the end of Sh-4. It is clear that Śabari has an important place in this tradition.[30] We therefore question the inclusion of Sh-4 in the tradition of Niguma.

The following text also concerns the Mahākāla tradition of Thang-stong:

Sh-5: dPal lcags zam pa'i bstan srung dbang po rnams kyi 'phrin las dngos grub gter mdzod.

By Chos-kyi Blo-gros.

Published in Thang stong chos mdzod, vol. 4, pp. 415-627.

Colophon translated: "The glorious powerful Siddha Thang-stong rGyal-po's version of the practices for the ritual cake visualization, and supplication and filling (ritual) of all the powerful teaching protectors, had existed at Ri-bo-che in upper gTsang and other seats (of the lCags-zam sect), including fast and efficacious rituals, etc., both detailed and concise, but here the instruction manuals were not complete. However, the mGon-po bDun-rdzogs is summarized in the instruction of the Grub chen thugs tig[31] of the omniscient teacher.[32] The lineage of the permission rites for the remaining (protectors of this system) is rarer than those for the six-armed

(Mahākāla) and the Tent (Mahākāla), but based on the fact that I received the initiations (srog-gtad) of all the Dharma protectors from the lineage of the lord 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po who was blessed over and over by the great and powerful Siddha, and at the behest of Ri-khed Bla-ma Rig-'dzin[33] who was born in the east in the province of 'Gu-log and who has a natural propensity for faith in the great Siddha, this was compiled and edited by 'Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Blo-gros at rDzong-gsar bKra-shis lHa-rtse, based upon collections of scattered ancient writings (yig-rnying) of the lCag-zam-pa and on the words of many previous teachers."

Contents: Elaborate rituals for worship, propitiation, and appeasement of the Dharma Protectors (dharmapāla) of Thang-stong, principally the mGon-po bDun-rdzogs, which includes the six-armed Jñānamahākāla, the four-armed Mahākāla, Beng, Gur-mgon, Bram-ze'i dPa'o, Tshogs-bdag Glang-chen, and rNam-thos-sras.

Sh-5 has been included here with the Shangs-pa systems of Thang-stong because the lineage listed on p. 479 is identical to that of Sh-4. According to the author's own statement in the colophon, however, the content of this system was culled from a number of sources. The text quotes students of Thang-stong such as Nyi-zla bZang-po and Shes-rab dPal-ldan who are usually not associated with the Shangs-pa sect. Another lineage listed on p. 472 of Sh-5 includes Saraha and Nāgārjuna, although the list is related to the Shangs-pa lineage in its later stages.

Thang-stong is said to have received the Ri-gong tradition of Mahākāla which stemmed from Mus-chen rGyal-mtshan dPal-bzang.[34] Since this figure is listed anterior to Thang-stong in the lineages of both Sh-4 and Sh-5, we may assume that these two texts are part of the Ri-gong tradition. According to Kong-sprul, the Ri-gong system of Mahākāla practice spread to the Phag-mo-'gru sect, the Karma Kam-tshang sect, and others.

B-1 confirms that Thang-stong studied the system of Sh-4 and Sh-5 with Byang-sems sByin-pa bZang-po, who is listed directly

before Thang-stong in the lineages to these texts. B-1 refers to this system as The Indivisibility of Guru and Protector (Bla-ma mGon-po dByer-med),[35] which is the subtitle to Sh-4. That the Indivisibility of Guru and Protector system is mentioned together with the other Shangs-pa doctrines taught by Byang-sems sByin-pa bZang-po supports our decision to list Sh-5 as a Shangs-pa work.

It will be noted that the following section of this chapter below discusses Thang-stong's Mahākāla systems that are not related to the Shangs-pa tradition.

It may be remarked in conclusion that Thang-stong's Shangs-pa affiliation may have a wider significance than is indicated by the topics covered in the literature listed herein. There seems to have been an attempt to incorporate the career of Thang-stong as a whole into his Shangs-pa legacy. The inclusion of Sh-1 in the song of the Ḍākinīs eulogizing his five names is a case in point.

Many of the later lCags-zam-pas, such as Thang-stong's principal biographer Lo-chen 'Gyur-med bDe-chen[36] and several of the members of the <u>gSang spyod snyan brgyud</u> lineage,[37] are said to have been Shangs-pas. The present head of the Shangs-pa sect, Lama Ka-lu Rinpoche, is recognized as an emanation of Thang-stong rGyal-po by Ri-ked Grub-thob Rinpoche.[38] Thus, the texts listed above constitute but Thang-stong's literary contribution to the Shangs-pa sect; his legendary and inspirational role may include other elements not recognized in this study.

Notes

1. See Matthew Kapstein, "The Shangs-pa bKa'-brgyud, an unknown tradition of Tibetan Buddhism" for a survey of the development of this sect.

2. See Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas, Shes bya kun khyab mdzod, vol. 4, pp. 531-532.

3. Niguma said to be the sister of Nāropa by Gene Smith, introduction to Shangs pa gser phreng: A Golden Rosary of Lives of Masters of the Shangs-pa dKar-brgyud School, pp. 1-2. See also George Roerch, trans., Blue Annals, p. 728. Herbert Guenther, The Life and Teachings of Nāropa, pp. xi-xii, indicates that she was Nāropa's wife, and cites The Collected Works of Blo-bzang Chos-kyi Nyi-ma dPal bZang-po, Lhasa edition, vol. 2, I, part iv, folio 3a. Guenther states that any female with whom there is a relation is sometimes called a sister in tantric Buddhism. See also Guenther, The Life and Teachings, pp. 15-19.

4. Discussed in detail by Kong-sprul, Shes bya kun khyab mdzod, vol. 1, pp. 529-534.

5. See Roerich, Blue Annals, p. 728 seq., for an account of the Shangs-pa successive transmission.

6. B-1, p. 63.

7. B-1, p. 49.

8. Rong-ston Shes-bya Kun-rig and Tshong-kha-pa's disciple mKhas-grub dGe-legs dPal-bzangs also studied with this teacher. See 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po, Bla ma rnam bzhi'i rnam thar bsdus ba le tshen bzhi, pp. 664-665.

9. B-4, p. 539.

10. B-1, pp. 63-64.

11. B-3, p. 727: "Ye shes mkha' 'gro ni gu lan gsum du/ byon nas dbang dang gdams ngag rdzogs par gnang/ 'dzu 'phrul mngon shes bsam mi khyab par 'khrungs/ gdams ngag yi ger bkod la gsol ba 'debs//."

12. Kong-sprul, Shes bya kun khyab mdzod, vol. 1, pp. 531-532.

13. Ri-bo-che the main monastery of the followers of Thang-stong. See p. 54 above, n. 41. Ri-bo-che is indicated to be the location of the composition of Sh-2, Sh-3 and Sh-4 in the colophons to same. See below.

14. In other contexts, the Mahāmudrā is one of four "seals" of the New Tantra system, namely, the great seal (mahāmudrā), the vow seal (samayamudrā) the Dharma seal (dharmamudrā) and the action seal (karmamudrā). See Ferdinand Lessing and Alex Wayman, Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems, pp. 225-239.

15. For the Mahāmudrā as a philosophical and meditational doctrine, see Garma C. C. Chang, Esoteric Teachings of the Tibetan Tantra, p. 283 seq.; Herbert Guenther, The Royal Song of Saraha; and Guenther, Life and Teaching, p. 222 seq. See also Lobsang Lhalungpa, trans., The Ultimate Mahāmudrā: The Moonlight of the Sublime Discourses on the Meditational System.

16. See Kazi Dawa Samdrup's translation of Padma dKar-po's version of the Na-ro Chos-drug in W. Y. Evans-Wentz, ed., Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines, pp. 155-250. See also Guenther, Life and Teaching, pp. 131-235.

17. Tsong-kha-pa's commentary on the Na-ro Chos-drug was translated by Chang, Esoteric Teachings, pp. 123-282.

18. Smith, introduction to Shangs pa gser phreng, p. 2.

19. Ibid, pp. 6-7.

20. See n. 23 below.

21. Cf. the last three lines of the 'Gro don mkha' khyab ma sādhana, which may be defined as a statement of the Three Carry Over Practices. See p. 128 above.

22. According to Kong-sprul, Shes bya kun khyab mdzod, vol. 4, p. 141 seq., the purification of these two bodies, plus the third body of the intermediate state, constitutes the basis of praxis in the Shangs-pa school.

23. See Matthew Kapstein, "The Shangs-pa Teachings of Deathlessness," p. 1. The teachings for immortality of body and mind were first transmitted in separate lineages. The teaching concerning mind was transmitted by Khyung-bo rNal-'byor, and that on body by Sang-rgyas gNyan-ston. The two traditions were later synthesized. The initiations for the two teachings are still transmitted separately, however. See Kong-sprul, Shes bya kun khyab mdzod, vol. 4, p. 141, and Zhwa-lu Ri-sbug sPrul-sku Blo-gsal bsTan-skyong, dPal ldan shangs pa bka' brgyud kyi gzhung bka' phyi ma rnams phyogs gcig tu bsgril pa'i phyag len bde chen snye ma'i chun po in gDams ngag mdzod, vol. 8, pp. 86-93.

24. The statement in Sh-2 (p. 276) that initiation into the five classes of tantras is sufficient for this practice probably refers to these five tantras: Cakrasaṃvara, Hevajra, Guhyasamāja, Mahāmāyā, and Vajrabhairava. According to sDe-gzhung Rinpoche, as recorded by

Kapstein, "Kong-sprul's Shes bya kun khyab mdzod," p. 39, these five tantras were synthesized in a text called Rin chen rgya mtsho rgyud (= *Ratnasagaratantra). This text was reportedly studied by Khyung-po rNal-'byor and adopted into the doctrine of the Shangs-pas, but was never translated into Tibetan. The scheme of the five tantras is illustrated in Sh-3-b, pp. 314-315, where the guru is visualized as Cakrasaṁvara at the center of a maṇḍala which is surrounded by the lords of the other four tantras, in the four directions.

25. Cf. Evans-Wentz, Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines, p. 173 seq.

26. Sh-2, p. 277; Sh-3-c, p. 319.

27. The Vajrapadas of the Shangs-pa successive transmission are listed in the table of contents to the gDams ngag mdzod, vol. 8, as being on pp. 757-853, but these texts are not in fact published in the volume. See Kapstein, "Kong-sprul's Shes bya kun khyab mdzod," n. 63, for a list of the currently published Shangs-pa Vajrapadas.

28. B-1, p. 64: "de'i skabs su rdo rje'i tshig rkang so so dang/ de dag la dngos shugs sbas gsum gyi man ngag gi 'phrul phye ste yongs su rdzogs par gdams shing/"

29. Sh-4 is not given its own title page, and is listed in the table of contents of the gDams ngag mdzod, vol. 8, as part of Sh-3-a.

30. B-1 reports Thang-stong's visionary meeting with Śabari in India, but the teaching said to have been transmitted is the Mahāmudrā. See p. 35, and p. 54, n. 29 above.

31. See Chapter 5 below. To our knowledge, the GT does not include any material on Mahākāla.

32. = 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po.

33. = Ri-ked Grub-thob Rinpoche.

34. Kong-sprul, Shes bya kun khyab mdzod, vol. 1, pp. 531-532.

35. B-1, p. 63.

36. His biography in Shangs pa gser phreng, pp. 669-670.

37. References to involvement with the Shangs-pa sect and the teachings of Niguma in the biographies of Nam-mkha' Legs-pa, mKhas-grub Sha-kya'i bShes-gnyen, Pha-rgod rGyal-mtshan dPal bZang-po, Glang-mkhar-ba, and others. See SP-1, Vol. 1, texts Nga, Ca, Cha, and Ta.

38. Ri-ked Grub-thob Rinpoche, personal letter, 1980.

The sPring gseb ma and Other Mahākāla Systems

Mahākāla is assigned a variety of functions in Vajrayāna Buddhism. At least 100 forms of the deity are known in Tibetan literature.[1] However this complex figure has been the subject of little research to date, save a limited study of the Mahākālatantra.[2]

Thang-stong rGyal-po is associated with meditation systems concerning several of the major Mahākāla forms. His Shangs-pa traditions of the six-armed Mahākāla and the mGon-po bDun-rdzogs have been treated above. In this section we will survey Thang-stong's system of the Gur-mgon (Pañjara Mahākāla) and the Bram-nag Shan-pa.

Other than his receipt of the Shangs-pa Bla ma mgon po dbyer med from sByin-pa bZang-po mentioned above,[3] we have little information about Thang-stong's study of the Mahākāla successive transmissions. M-1 claims that Thang-stong received teachings on the Bram-nag Shan-pa from Re-mda'-pa. However this is not supported by B-1, which does record Thang-stong's meeting with Re-mda'-pa, but states only that the gShin rje gshed dmar nag 'jigs gsum on Yamantaka was taught by the latter.[4]

B-1 records Thang-stong's performance of Mahākāla rites on several occasions: While travelling to Klo, he made a vow in the presence of several Mahākāla statues at sGom-nag near sMan-mo-sgang and caused a self-produced (rang-byon) image of Mahākāla with a crow's face to appear.[5] Near Phag-ri, Thang-stong performed the inner, outer, and secret mchod-gtor ritual for Mahākāla.[6] He gave an initiation and permission rite (anujñā) for the protectors of the Dharma (dharmapāla) at the Crystal Cave in sGrag-yang rDzong in Central

Tibet, during which some of the participants saw a six-armed Mahākāla at Thang-stong's right side, Gur-mgon at his left, the four-armed Mahākāla and Legs-ldan at his back, and rNam-sras rTa-bdag-brgyad in front of him.[7] In the latter part of his life, he "illustrated the relativity of vision" while performing a ceremony with nine offering-cakes (gtor-ma), by causing his students to see him as the Six-armed Mahākāla, his patron to see him as Gur-mgon, and the practitioners of the four-armed Mahākāla sādhana to see him as that form.[8]

The principal transic event in which Thang-stong had a vision of Gur-mgon is reported by several sources.[9] The vision is said to have occurred during Thang-stong's journey around the Indian subcontinent. Immediately before his decision to go to U-rgyan, Thang-stong came to a "frightening cemetery" in a forest called 'Jigs-byed Mun-pa Tshal.[10] There, while shuddering in the midst of howling corpses and the like, Thang-stong met Guru Bram-ze mChog-sred (Mahākāla in human form as a brahmin), surrounded by yogis and yoginīs. Bram-ze gave Thang-stong initiations and teachings on Gur-mgon.[11] Then Thang-stong performed the offering feast (gaṇacakra), and Gur-mgon with retinue appeared in the sky, admidst swirling clouds of dark smoke. Bram-ze ordered the Mahākāla to perform any action that Thang-stong requested, thereby establishing the deity as protector of the Dharma.

The system which is based on this vision is entitled Gur mgon sprin gseb ma[12] (herein abbreviated PSM). Its history and lineage is recorded by the Fifth Dalai Lama,[13] and it is listed in Akhu Rinpoche's catalogue of rare books.[14] Both of these sources state that the PSM text was originally set down by Thang-stong's successor

bsTan-'dzin Nyi-zla bZang-po.

The following text on the PSM tradition was written by a contemporary of the Fifth Dalai Lama's teacher bSod-nams mChog-ldan:

PSM-1: dPal rdo rje nag po chen po gur mgon sprin zhabs kyi sgrub thabs rjes gnang dang bcas pa nye brgyud thun mong ma yin pa.

By Ngag-dbang bsTan-'dzin Phun-thogs.

Published in sGrub thabs kun btus, vol. Shrī, pp. 324-335.

Content: Permission rite (anujñā) for the PSM system, involving visualization of a chosen deity (yi-dam) such as Hevajra 'as-self,' and of Gur-mgon 'in-front.' Stated purpose of the rite is to exhort the Mahākāla to protect Buddhism and its practitioners.

Statement, p. 331, of affiliation to the Sa-skya Mahākāla tradition.

Lineage, p. 334:

Vajradhara
Bram-ze mChog-sred
Thang-stong rGyal-po
Kun-bzang Chos-kyi Nyi-ma
Kun-dga' Grol-mchog
Nyi-zla bZang-po
Ngag-dbang Nyi-ma
Kun-dga' bSod-nams dBang-phyug

PSM-1 contains no trace of a core text, nor does it indicate the existence of one. Thus the nature of Thang-stong's role in the tradition's formation is difficult to evaluate. We may only note that the occurrence of the PSM vision as described above was accepted at least by the early 17th century.

We might further remark that PSM-1 is included in the section of the sGrub thabs kun btus devoted to the protectors of the Dharma, and not with the sādhanas for Mahākāla which are grouped in volume Tha of that collection. This positioning of PSM-1 is in keeping with the B-1's statement that Thang-stong acquired mGur-mgon as a Dharma

protector after the PSM Pure Vision occurred.

Another text, labelled "a system (devised) by Thang-stong" (Thang-rgyal lugs) in the sGrub thabs kun btus table of contents, is in fact a successive transmission which is traced back to Nāgārjuna.[15] Thang-stong's role in this transmission is not elaborated. It is possible that the system, though not devised by Thang-stong, was codified by him. The text is presented immediately after PSM-1 in the sGrub thabs kun btus. It is, however, unrelated to the PSM, and describes an independent iconographic form of Mahākāla

M-1: (no title)

Published in sGrub thabs kun btus, vol. Shrī, pp. 336-349.

a) dPal mgon nag gam nag po dam 'chang gi zin (p. 336).

By (student of Ngag-dbang Chos-grags).

Content: Outline of the visualization system of the black Bram-ze'i gZugs,[16] with retinue of six (Bram-nag bShan-pa Drug-skor). Includes summary of the permission rite (anujñā).

Lineage (p. 337):

Vajradhara
Nāgārjuna
Yogi Kāmarūpa
Zhang-mdo sDe-pa
'Jam-skya Nam-mkha' dPal-ldan
Grang-mo Che-pa
Red-mda'-pa
Thang-stong rGyal-po
Ras-chen dPal-'byor bZang-po
Thams-cad mKhyen-pa rDo-rje gDan-pa
rGya-ston Byang-chub dBang-rgyal
Kun-dga' Grol-mchog
bsTan-'dzin Ngag-dbang Nyi-zla bZang-po
'Jam-dbyangs dBang-phyug Rab-brtan
mKhan-chen Ngag-dbang Chos-grags
des bdag la'o[17]

b) _Bram nag shan pa drug bskor gyi rjes gnang bdud dpung mthar byed_ (p. 339).

By Blo-gter dBang-po, according to the _rJes gnang gi cho ga dngos grub rgya mtsho_ by Tshar-chen.

Content: Permission rite for Bram-nag bShan-pa Drug-skor. Describes visualization of a chosen deity such as Hevajra 'as-self,' and of Mahākāla 'in-front.' Requires the offering of cakes and prayers for propitiation. Discussion of worldly (_laukika_) and supra-worldly (_lokottara_) protectors. Nāgārjuna's receipt of this system from Vajradhara is described in brief.

Statement (p. 341) that the system is related to the core tantra (_rtsa-rgyud_) of the _Guyhasāmaja_ and to the explanatory tantra (_bshad-rgyud_) of the _Cakrasaṃvara_.

Lineage (p. 342) same as in M-1-a, but continues down to 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po.

The fragmentary nature of the available literature on Thang-stong's Mahākāla systems, as suggested here and in the section on the Shangs-pa systems above, gives reason to believe that other texts on this subject attributed to Thang-stong may have existed at some point.

Notes

1. See mGon po'i rgyud skor collection (Bya rog ma bstan srung bcas kyi chos skor according to the traditions transmitted by Phag-mo-gru-pa). 100 forms of Mahākāla are listed by Kun-dga' Grol-mchog, Khrid-brgya, pp. 606-607. Sādhanas of the various Mahākālas are treated in Tāranātha, sGrub thabs rin chen 'byung gnas, vol. 2. Several of the major Mahākālas are illustrated in Blanche Olschak and Geshe Thupten Wangyal, Mystic Art of Ancient Tibet, pp. 169; 171; 175.

2. William Stablein, Mahākālatantra: A Theory of Ritual Blessing and Tantric Medicine.

3. B-1, p. 63. See p. 187 above.

4. B-1, pp. 72-73; M-1, p. 337.

5. B-1, p. 138. The crow-faced image said to be still in existence at the writing of B-1.

6. B-1, p. 163; B-5, p. 130b.

7. B-1, p. 203.

8. B-1, p. 280.

9. Almost identical accounts given in B-1, pp. 94-95 and PSM-1, pp. 330-331. See n. 13 below.

10. PSM-1, p. 330. This forest said to be in Mon-yul.

11. B-1, p. 94 states that he received the initiation (dbang), blessing (byin-rlabs), and authorization (bka'-gtad). PSM-1, p. 330 states that he received precepts (gdams-pa) and permission rites (rjes-gnang).

12. Alt. sPrin-zhabs. The form sprin-gseb is preferable, as it is given by the earliest source (the gSan-yig), and by Akhu Rinpoche. See nn. 13 and 14 below. sPrin-zhabs is introduced in the sGrub thabs kun btus edition of PSM-1. Further, the term sprin-gseb, meaning 'between the clouds,' is descriptive of the vision whereas sprin-zhabs has no recognizable meaning other than 'foot of the cloud' (?).

13. Ngag-dbang Blo-bzang rGya-mtsho (Fifth Dalai Lama), gSan-yig, vol. 1, pp. 391-392.

14. Akhu Rinpoche, dPe rgyud dkon pa 'ga' zhig gi tho yig, p. 576, #12753.

15. See Lama Chimpa and Alaka Chattopadhyaya, Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India, p. 107, for description of Nāgārjuna's installation of Mahākāla as his Dharmapāla. See also S. C. Sarcar, "A Tibetan Account of Nāgārjuna," p. 95 and n. 34.

16. See Olschak and Wangyal, Mystic Art, p. 96 for what seems to be another form of Bram-ze'i gZugs-sku from the Sa-skya tradition.

17. Lit. "the above (passed the tradition) to me." The author does not identify himself by name.

The Vajradhara Guruyoga

The Buddha Vajradhara is often portrayed as the ultimate source of the Vajrayāna. In Tibetan Buddhism, his name (rDo-rje 'Chang) becomes an epithet for the 'root guru' (rtsa-ba'i bla-ma).[1] Vajradhara is characterized as the primordial Buddha (ādibuddha) in the New Tantras;[2] this role is assumed by the primordial Buddha Samantabhadra in the Old Tantras.

Vajradhara appears as a sixth and transcendent member of the group of the five Buddha families.[3] In addition, he is often positioned as the idealized form of the guru in the guruyoga (bla-ma rnal-'byor), a specialized form of sādhana in which the practitioner meditatively assumes the knowledge and wisdom of his teacher, here equated to the Buddha.

Several visions of Vajradhara are attributed to Thang-stong. On one occasion he is said to have received prophecies from this Buddha.[4] Vajradhara is also portrayed as having directed Thang-stong to discover the U rgyan thugs kyi yang tig kun bzang dgongs pa tshig 'dus Treasure text which is counted as one of Thang-stong's 'Dharma portions' (chos-skal).[5]

A vision of Vajradhara which was the source of a guruyoga tradition attributed to Thang-stong is reported to have occurred during a period of retreat at the Zhal-dkar lHa-gdong meditation hut in Thar-pa Gling.[6] At that time, Vajradhara, along with the five Buddhas (rigs-lnga), four consorts (yum-bzhi), eight Bodhisattvas, ten wrathful deities, and five goddesses, appeared "in reality"[7] before Thang-stong.[8] Vajradhara then gave many teachings, most

notably a set of meditation instructions (bsgom-khrid) concerning the practice of guruyoga.

That Thang-stong later taught a meditation system based on this vision to an old woman is reported in all of the sources listed below, and is related in depth in B-1: Once Thang-stong spent three days near the Jo-bo image at sKyid-grong, and made numerous prayers for the success of Buddhism and for all beings. While circumambulating the image he met an old woman who had committed many crimes for the sake of her son. She had later been abandoned by this son. The woman had "given up all hope" and had devoted herself to religion in order to obtain a better life in her next incarnation. When Thang-stong saw her she was in a state of extreme poverty and ill-health, and could hardly perform the circumambulation. Thang-stong, walking in front of her, spoke to her and instructed her in the Dharma. The woman said she was overjoyed to meet a great Lama at last, and begged him for a quick, easy, and assured way to attain enlightenment. Thang-stong thereupon taught her a guruyoga system based on his vision of Vajradhara. It is said that after the old woman practiced this system for some time, her body was transformed into that of a sixteen year-old girl, she attained the highest Mahāmudrā realization, and went to Khecarī in a rainbow body.[9]

The following texts present the guruyoga system of Thang-stong's Vajradhara vision:

V-1: Nye brgyud kyi gdam pa khyad par can zab lam bla ma'i rnal 'byor rang nyams su len pa dang gzhan la spel thabs kyi khyad par ser gyis phyed pa utpala dkar po'i 'phreng ba.

By Ngag-dbang bsTan-'dzin.

Published in Thang stong chos mdzod, vol. 4, pp. 287-303.

Colophon (pp. 302-302) states that the basic text (rtsa-ba'i yig-cha) of this tradition was written by (Kun-dga') Grol-mchog, and the interpolations and notes of V-1 are based on the author's memory as well as on the notes of Kun-dga' gZhan-'phan bZang-po.

Content: Quotes from various tantras on the meaning of the guru (p. 209); the story of Thang-stong's teaching of this system to the old woman at sKyid-grong (p. 294); instructions for the meditation (p. 295).

Lineage (p. 303):

Vajradhara
Thang-stong rGyal-po
rJe-btsun rDo-ring-pa
Kun-bzang Chos-kyi Nyi-ma
Grol-mchog
mTshungs-med Nyi-zla bZang-po
Grub-mchog Ngag-dbang Nyi-ma
Kun-dga' bSod-nams dBang-phyug
mKhan-chen rDo-rje 'Dzin-pa
des bdag la'o[9a]

V-2: Grub chen bla ma thang stong rgyal po'i nye brgyud bla ma'i rnal 'byor gyi gdams pa.

By Ngag-dbang bsTan-'dzin Phun-tshogs (of Thang-stong's family [? rigs] and lineage [chos-brgyud]).

Published in Thang stong chos mdzod, vol. 4, pp. 305-320; and in SP-2, vol. 2, pp. 106-108.

Content: Same content as V-1, with minor differences in arrangement of information. History of the tradition (p. 309) includes a quote from an unidentified eulogistic biography of Thang-stong (rnam-thar gsol-'debs).

V-3: Thang rgyal lugs kyi bla ma rdo rje 'chang gi sgom lung mchod chog dang bcas pa.

Published in sGrubs thabs kun btus, vol. Tha, pp. 33-53.

a) (no title) (pp. 34-36).

Content: Description of the Vajradhara guruyoga system of Thang-stong rGyal-po.

b) (the lineage [lung-thob-pa'i brgyud-pa]) (p. 36).

By Padma bShes-gnyen

Lineage:

Vajradhara
Grub-chen lCags-zam-pa Chen-po (= Thang-stong)
sTag-lung-pa bDe-chen dPal-bzang
Yig-drug-pa Shes-rab dPal-'byor
'Jam-mgon Kun-dga' Grol-mchog
Ngag-dbang Nyi-zla bZang-po
rJe-dpan Ngag-dbang Nyi-ma
Kun-dga' bSod-nams dBang-phyug
rMor-chen Ngag-dbang Kun-dga' lHun-grub
Ra-smad mKhan-chen Ngag-dbang bSod-nams mChog-grub
bsTan-'dzin Ye-shes lHun-grub
des bdag Pad-ma bShes-gnyen la'o

c) (text of prayers to be recited [mnyes-byed mchod-pa'i cho-ga]) (p. 36).

By Blo-gter dBang-po.

Colophon (p. 53) states that these prayers are in the tradition of the Shangs-pa school.

Content: The same meditation text as in V-3-a, with extra liturgies inserted at various points. Includes a prayer to Thang-stong entitled "bDud dpung 'joms mdzad."

The colophon to V-1 indicates that there had been a core text for this system which was redacted by Kun-dga' Grol-mchog. We may theorize that the system was transmitted orally to rDo-ring-pa and the other students prior to its codification by Kun-dga' Grol-mchog. The story of the old woman, which indicates that Thang-stong taught the meditation orally, supports this notion.

The visualization system may be summarized as follows: The meditator imagines that his mind has instantaneously arrived at the 'bright state of naked self-awareness.'[10] He finds himself in the

Akaniṣṭha Paradise. The blue Vajradhara as Dharma Body, with consort, appears in the space directly in front of him. Lights from the <u>oṁ</u>, <u>āḥ</u>, and <u>hūṁ</u> letters at Vajradhara's forehead, throat, and heart respectively shine on the Buddha lands, and then are reabsorbed into the Vajradhara figure. The meditator entreats Vajradhara to grant blessings, the four initiations, and various powers. A liturgy is recited, of which the following lines are common to V-1, V-2, and V-3, and may therefore be part of the original core text: "Right now, quickly now, in this very place, on this very receptacle, not at some future time, but in actuality, please grant your blessings!"[11] Vajradhara transmits blessings and initiations to the meditator, and all of his emotional obstructions are destroyed. The meditator prays that he will reach Vajradhara's level. Then the 'transference of consciousness' (<u>'pho-ba</u>) occurs whereby the meditator's basic mind (<u>rang-sems</u>) assumes the form of the guru, and flies like a bird out of the top of the meditator's head and arrives at the Pure Land. After remaining in a state of primordial awareness, the meditator arises and prays that all merit derived from this practice is to be shared with all beings.

The outstanding feature of this meditation system is its simplicity. Its structure, involving the 'in-front' visualization, belongs to the preliminary tantric levels.[12] Further, there is no mantra to be recited. The emphasis is on the image of the Buddha, and its conferral of blessings and power. Nevertheless, the system is labelled as an "unsurpassed technique to engender an involuntary shining forth of spontaneous wisdom,"[13] a phrase which reflects the terminology of the higher tantric practices. Further, the inclusion of the transference of consciousness visualization in this system

indicates that there may be an affiliation to the Anuttara. Thus we find that this tradition synthesizes the simple tantric techniques with elements belonging to the higher tantras, a theme that we have also observed in Thang-stong's 'Gro don mkha' khyab ma. The system's simultaneous simplicity and profundity is stressed by the tradition, as in the story of the old woman which is presented as a case in point.

Guruyoga is usually classified with the 'special preliminary practices' (thun-mong ma-yin-pa'i sngon-'gro) of the Vajrayāna, along with the Sumeru maṇḍala-offering, and the hundred-syllable mantra of Vajrasattva.[14] The practices that are included under this rubric are performed 100,000 times as a preliminary to initiation into the higher tantras. The sGrub thabs kun btus presents a number of systems of this sort under the general heading of 'basic requirements' (nyer-mkho). V-3 is included in that section, but it may be noted that it is not attached to the other standard preliminary practices.[15] Further, there are no statements indicating this guruyoga to be a preliminary to initiation; rather, the system is presented as a self-sufficient path to enlightenment.

Thus this guruyoga system does not fully correspond to the preliminary practice genre. Neither can it be assigned the status of the 'guru-accomplishing practice' (bla-sgrub) of the Old Tantra system which involves complex yogic exercises.[16]

The other guru meditation traditions traced to Thang-stong may be compared here. The 'Chi med dpal ster is a guruyoga that employs as-self visualization of Amitāyus.[17] The guruyoga stemming from the vision of Hūṁkāra prescribes the visualization of Thang-stong himself as primordial guru.[18] Thang-stong's system of

meditation on Mahākāla, sub-titled "The Indivisibility of Guru and Protector,"[19] connects the guru to the Dharma protectors (*dharmapāla*). Finally, the *Grub thob thugs tig* is an example of the guru-accomplishing genre of the Discovered Treasure traditions.[20] That Thang-stong is associated with numerous guru-related traditions is a reflection of his legacy as a pre-eminent guru of Tibetan visionary Buddhism.

Notes

1. See discussion by Herbert Guenther, "The Spiritual Teacher in Tibet," pp. 178-195.

2. See Alex Wayman, Yoga of the Guhyasamājatantra, p. 26 seq.; and Ferdinand Lessing and Alex Wayman, Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems, pp. 37-39.

3. See Lessing and Wayman, Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems, p. 100 seq.

4. B-1, p. 106.

5. B-1, p. 114. See Appendix below.

6. Thang-stong is variously said to have stayed there in retreat for one month (V-1, p. 293), or for four years (B-1, p. 87).

7. (mngon-sum-du). V-1, p. 290. See discussion p. 72 seq. above.

8. See V-2, pp. 306-309; B-1, p. 87; and B-3, pp. 716-717, all of which give essentially the same account. V-2, p. 309, quotes four lines from an eulogistic biography (rnam-thar gsol-'debs) which also gives the same account. (Cf. report of another unknown eulogistic biography in CM-1 and CM-2: see p. 149 above.)

9. B-1's account (pp. 92-94) differs in some details from Ngag-dbang bsTan-'dzin's reports (V-1, V-2). B-1 claims that the woman had already heard of Thang-stong when she met him and considered herself to be his follower. V-1 states that the woman saw Thang-stong as Vajradhara, whereas B-1 states that she saw Thang-stong as the Jo-bo Śākyamuni image. The song Thang-stong sang to the woman is presented in full in B-1, of which but one verse is preserved in V-1.

9a. See p. 209 above, n. 17.

10. "(Tshogs drug sgyu ma'i lam chad pa'i) rang rig rjen pa'i mdangs der/ skad cig yid 'gyus pa/"

11. "da lta nyi du/ myur ba nyid du/ 'dug sa nyid du/ stan thog 'di nyid du/ 'phi dus la ma ltos par mngon sum du 'gyur bas byin gyis brlab tu gsol/"

12. See p. 86 above.

13. B-1, p. 87: "lhan cig skyes pa'i ye shes rang dbang med par 'char ba'i thabs mkhas bla na med/"

14. Described by Stephan Beyer, The Cult of Tārā: Magic and Ritual in Tibet, pp. 434-441.

15. However, Blo-gter dBang-po, V-3-c, p. 52 prescribes the recitation of the 100-syllable mantra (yig-brgya) as a corollary to this practice.

16. Of the three major sections of guru (bla), completion (rdzogs), and essential mind (thugs) of the Rin chen gter mdzod, the guru-accomplishing practices (bla-sgrub) comprise the guru section.

17. See p. 153-154 above.

18. See p. 169 above.

19. Sh-4, p. 332.

20. Described in depth in GT-II. See Chapter 5 below.

<u>The Ritual Employment of Siṁhamukhā</u>

Alnimal-headed deities seem to have had a considerable following in both Indian and Tibetan tantricism, as evidenced by such figures in the Vajrayāna pantheon as the sow-headed Vajravārāhī, the horse-headed Hayagrīva, and the bull-headed Yamantaka. The lion-headed Ḍākinī Siṁhamukhā is less well known and her history uncertain at present. The imagery of the lion as a symbol of fearlessness, power, and royalty was widespread in India and in Buddhism, but the position of its female personification in the class of the Ḍākinīs seems to have been relatively peripheral and minor in India. Two sādhanas, for a red and a blue Siṁhavaktrā, are preserved in Tāranātha's collection of Indic meditative traditions, in the section covering the visualization of miscellaneous deities (<u>sna-tshogs sgrub-thabs</u>).[1] We may also note the presence of a lion-faced creature in a maṇḍala of the <u>Saṁvarodayatantra</u> from the <u>Cakrasaṁvara</u> cycle.[2]

In Tibet, Siṁhamukhā appears most prominently in the Discovered Treasure literature, where a number of cycles are devoted to her in the section on the chosen deities (<u>yi-dam</u>) that are intermediate (<u>so-mtshams</u>) between worldly (<u>laukika</u>) and supraworldly (<u>lokottara</u>) in the <u>Rin chen gter mdzod</u>.[3] In view of the Discovered Treasures' dependency on the Old Tantras, we would expect to find canonical sources for this Ḍākinī in the <u>rNying ma'i bgyud 'bum</u>.[4] Siṁhamukhā is included in a collection of 300 icons amongst the animal-headed Ḍākinīs who have been assigned warring and protective functions.[5] Further, she appears in the maṇḍala of wrathful deities in the <u>Tibetan Book of the Dead</u>, again in the outer circles along with other animal-headed

figures, where she is characterized as one of the "four female door keepers."[6] The origin of Siṁhamukhā is probably ultimately to be traced to the shamanic milieu, in which the mythical function of animals as guardian spirits and psychopomps is well known.[7] Her function in Tibet as a protector who defeats the enemies of Buddhism is in consonance with such an origin.

The text to be discussed here contains a visualization and invokation of the powers of this figure in her Tibetan form as Seng-zhal-can (alt. Seng-ge'i gDong-can), and purports to be based on a tradition originating in a vision by Thang-stong rGyal-po:

Se-1: rJe grub thob chen po nas brgyud pa'i mkha' 'gro seng zhal can gyi 'phrin las 'dod pa'i mchog ster.

By sKal-bzang mKhyen-brtse'i dPal, at the behest of Ri-ked Thugs-rje dPal of sMar-gyi 'Gu-log.

Published in Thang stong chos mdzod, vol. 4, pp. 389-413.

Colophon (p. 412) states that the text for this tradition is rare, but that the blessing (byin-rlabs) of the meditation text (sgom-bzlas) has been transmitted in an unbroken succession. This text said to be a revival (snon) of the system based on the instructions of various masters, and to utilize material from both the Old and New Tantras.

Content:
a) Short statement of the history of the system (p. 390); instructions for visualization of Seng-zhal-can (here Sanskritized as Siṁhamukhā) as-self (p. 392); mantras (p. 398); and empowerment of consecrated cakes (gtor-ma) (p. 399).
b) Visualization with a specific function (las-tshogs), according to a method devised by the yogi San-rgyas mGon-po, involving a similar visualization as a) above with the addition of visualized envoys (pho-nya) employed to avert demons (p. 401).

The original vision to which this system is connected is said to have occurred during one of Thang-stong's extended meditative and ascetic periods. The short introductory statement to Se-1 indicates

that Thang-stong had numerous visions of this Ḍākinī while in retreat at the Zhal-dkar lHa-gdong hut at Thar-pa Gling. The text also states that the Ḍākinī exhorted him to "study" with the 8th century Indian Siddha Virūpa, and made predictions of the meritorious feats that Thang-stong would accomplish in the future. The episode is also related in B-1, where it is stated that Thang-stong stayed at Thar-pa Gling for six years, living only on goat's milk. During that time Seng-ge'i gDong-pa-can appeared in the sky and told him to go to an Indian cemetery called Keng-rus Me-'bar to find Virūpa. Thang-stong "flew" to India, received the Path and Fruit (Lam-'bras) Teachings and then magically returned to his meditation hut.[8] B-3 also reports on his receipt of the Path and Fruit Teachings from Virūpa, but makes no mention of a vision of the lion-headed Ḍākinī.[9]

The account in B-1, which is relatively detailed, does not state that Thang-stong received Buddhist teachings or meditation instructions from Siṁhamukhā during the vision. However Se-1 asserts that the visualization system it describes represents "the current of (Siṁhamukhā's) profound instructions of the Extremely Direct Transmission." This statement, plus the labelling of Se-1 in its title and colophon as "a tradition of the Mahāsiddha (Thang-stong)," are the only explicit claims of Thang-stong's connection to this tradition. There is no discernible core text or fragment thereof, and indeed the technique presented in the second portion of Se-1 is attributed not to Thang-stong, but to one Sangs-rgyas mGon-po of whom nothing is presently known. Thus we have no evidence to verify the author's claim in the colophon of an "unbroken current from the blessings of a core sādhana" ("sgom-bzlas rtsa-ba'i byin-rlabs kyi chu-bo mtshams

ma-ched-pa")[10] nor any indication of Thang-stong's role as original author or formulator, other than the text's own assertion.

The precise canonical affiliation of Se-1 is elusive at this point. The colophon states that both the Old and New Tantras were utilized. We may also note that the system categorizes Siṃhamukhā in the Buddha family headed by Vairocana, but this general classification can hardly suggest textual affiliation.

The meditation system of Se-1, involving visualization of the Ḍākinī as-self, invitation of the initiating deities, invocation of the actual wisdom being, chanting of mantra, request for power, empowerment of consecrated cakes that appease, and employment of magical envoys that attack enemies, follows the standard lines of the Tibetan sādhanas for protective deities.

Se-1 is to be included in the class of Tibetan literature devoted to the protection of Dharma practitioners and the destruction of evil forces through structured imaginative and magical methods. In addition to the generic term 'functional practice' (las-tshogs) encountered on p. 400, we may also note the word 'action' ('phrin-las) from the title, a term which emphasizes the functional orientation of the practice. These terms imply that the Ḍākinī's war-making powers are to be employed through visualizational means.

The linkage of this tradition with a vision of Thang-stong provided authenticity and signified efficacy. However, the extent to which the system was current in the lCags-zam sect has not been determined.

Notes

1. Tāranātha, Yi dam rgya mtsho'i rin chen 'byung gnas, vol. 2, pp. 494-497.

2. See Shinchi Tsuda, The Saṃvarodaya Tantra, Selected Chapters, 17: 42.

3. Vols. Khi-Gi in the mTshur-phu edition.

4. See p. 96 above, n. 60.

5. Rol-pa'i rDo-rje, sKu brnyan brgya phrag gsum, icon 188.

6. W. Y. Evans-Wentz, The Tibetan Book of the Dead, p. 142 seq.

7. See Mircea Eliade, Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy, p. 92 seq.

8. Pp. 86-87.

9. B-3, p. 727.

10. Se-1, p. 412.

The rNam thar sgo gsum Vision

A visionary episode related in four independent sources leads to the supposition that a philosophical treatise by Thang-stong, most likely entitled rNam thar sgo gsum, existed at some point.

B-1 describes the vision thusly:

> Then (Thang-stong) went to mDog Klog-skya, and sent all the horses, mules, and monks...on to work on the walls for building the iron bridge at bKra-shis-rtse. The Mahāsiddha performed water austerities for twenty-one days at an auspicious meditation hermitage called Tho-le-lhas. He saw the face of the Precious Teacher along with his two special disciples (śrāvaka), and heard an exceptional teaching on the seven branches. (Then) he tied up four powerful demons. Then he walked on top of the mDog River, which many people said they saw in various ways.[1]

The nature of the teaching received in this vision is not labelled, other than the indefinite appellation "seven branches."[2] B-2, relating the same incident, specifies that the teaching in the vision was connected to the Prajñāpāramitā:

> At the The-he-lhas cave at lDog-gi Klog-skya,
> He heard the Prajñāpāramitā from the threesome of the powerful
> Sage (muni) with his principal attendants.
> Having tamed a demon, he went on the lDog river without sinking.[3]

B-2's account corroborates B-1's claim that Thang-stong subdued demons and walked on water after the vision.

The account in B-3 identifies the teaching as being connected both to the "branches" and to the Prajñāpāramitā:

> The Bhagavān granted him all the Dharma-doors, and after the branches were unfolded, (Thang-stong) heard the Prajñāpāramitā.[4]

The phrase 'Dharma-door' anticipates the appellation of the teaching of the vision as it is specified in the following sources:

A biographical sketch in the Grub thob thugs tig reports on the vision thusly:

> In the center of the right corner of Tibet's gTsang province, He was introduced to the three doors to deliverance, and thus was thoroughly converted to the Mādhyamika philosophy.[5]

This account identifies the teaching transmitted in the vision as the Buddhist doctrine of the 'three doors to deliverance' (_triṇi vimokṣa mukhāni_, Tib. _rnam-thar sgo-gsum_). In another reference to the same vision, also from the _Grub thob thugs tig_, it appears that the Tibetan phrase for this doctrine was also the title of a work by Thang-stong based on the vision:

> His philosophy, which is the essence of the eight thousand (verses) of the Mādhyamika, is contained in the _rNam thar sgo gsum_, along with its related explanatory text (_khrid_).[6]

It is reasonable to assume that this system, in whatever literary form it was presented, was related in content to the doctrine of the three doors to deliverance, and to the "eight thousand verses" of the _Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā_.

It is possible that the text of the _rNam thar sgo gsum_ is extant in the sixteen volumes of the _Thang stong chos mdzod_ still unpublished at this writing.

Notes

1. B-1, p. 189.

2. Could refer to the 'seven branches of enlightenment' (sapta bodhyaṅgāni) (Mahāvyutpatti 988).

3. B-2, p. 46.

4. B-3, p. 727.

5. GT-III-2, p. 362.

6. GT-I-3, p. 601. See p. 89 above.

Other Publications

A collection of versified prayers, said to have been composed by Thang-stong, has been preserved by the Sa-skya sect and published recently. One of the entries in this collection is to be found in B-1; another is the widely distributed mKha' khyab ma sādhana. The source of the other prayers has not been ascertained. The colophon states only that oral traditions were utilized.

S-1: Grub chen thang stong rgyal po'i rdo rje gsung sa skya nad grol mar grags pa'i smon lam byin rlabs can.

By Thang-stong rGyal-po. Edited by dPal-ldan rGyal-mtshan and Kaḥ-thog mGon-po, of sDe-dge gSer-ljongs.

Woodblock print. 8 folios.

Colophon (p. 86) states that the songs of Thang-stong were obtained from the verbal reports of several "eminent personages," and were published in hopes of improving the current Tibetan situation.

a) (Sa skya nad grol ma'i smon lam) (p. 1b).

Content: Versified prayer to avert epidemics (yams). Includes the Ma nam mkha ma refuge prayer by bKa'-lnga-pa dPal-'byor Shes-rab (p. 1b).[1]

Sub-colophon (p. 3a) states that Thang-stong saved the area of Sa-skya from a plague by singing this prayer.

b) Grub chen thang stong rgyal po'i rdo rje'i gsung mtshom gyi 'jigs pa zhi ba'i bden tshig (p. 3a).

Content: Versified prayer to avert war and foster a good harvest.

Sub-colophon (p. 4b) states that Thang-stong prayed thusly and subdued fighting factions in Me-nyag in Eastern Tibet.

c) Grub chen thang stong rgyal po'i gsung mu ge'i 'jigs pa zhi ba'i gsol 'debs (p. 4b).

Content: Versified prayer to avert famine. = B-1, pp. 196-197.

Sub-colophon (p. 6b) states that Thang-stong prayed thusly in front of the Jo-bo Rinpoche statue and thereby ended a famine in central Tibet.

d) ('Gro don mkha' khyab ma) (p. 6b).

Content: = KKM-1-a.

The text continues with two prayers not attributed to Thang-stong:

e) (no title) (p. 7a).

By 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po.

Sub-colophon (p. 8a) states that this prayer was dictated by mKhyen-brtse to (Kong-sprul) Blo-gros mTha'-yas.

Content: versified prayer for averting disasters in Tibet.

f) (Klu sgrub smon lam) (p. 8a).

Content: General prayer for success in the practice of Buddhism. Includes a short text entitled Uvariśudhaśodhanāmadhāranī, which contains a mantra said to summarize the essence of the entire Buddhist canon (bKa' 'gyur), and other mantras which impart strength and discipline, and which purify bad karma.

Text concludes with a four-line prayer for the longevity of the 14th Dalai Lama bsTan-'dzin rGya-mtsho.

This collection exemplifies the modern legacy of Thang-stong in his role of national saviour. This image may be traced to B-1, where numerous occasions on which he sang songs and prayers to magically avert disaster are reported.

The phrases 'Vajra utterance' (rdo-rje gsung) and 'possessing a blessing' (byin-rlabs can) in the title to the collection indicate, respectively, that these works are pithy texts, and convey a special spiritual power. We have seen that the phrases 'Vajra song' and 'possessing a blessing' are also applied in a technical sense to the

visionary materials which form the core texts for Thang-stong's meditation traditions. However, with the exception of the mKha' khyab ma, the texts in this collection are but prayers sung on particular occasions, and are not the basis for systems of meditation. The assertion that these utterances hold efficacious mystical power illustrates the level to which the legend of Thang-stong has reached. All that he allegedly did or said, even his prayers on behalf of the community's worldly good, has been elevated to an esoteric and visionary status.

A manual for the daily performance of the 'preliminary practices' according to the tradition of Thang-stong was composed in 1974 by Ri-ked Grub-thob Rinpoche, the current lineage holder of the lCags-zam sect:

P-1: Theg mchog lam bzang nye bsdud baidurya'i thems skas.

By sPrang-rgan Bya-btang-ba (= Ri-ked Grub-thob Rinpoche).

Manuscript. 4 folios.

Colophon (p. 4b) states that the text was written hurriedly while the author was travelling to Bodhgaya, and was intended for students of the lCags-zam lineage.

Content: Meditation manual for the preliminary practices. Includes the Ma nam mkha' ma refuge prayer by bKa'-lnga-pa dPal-'byor Shes-rab (p. 2a);[2] a purificatory practice (sdig-sgrib byangs) on the deity Dam-rtsig rDo-rje (p. 2b); production stage visualization of Thang-stong in-front (p. 2b); the mantra oṁ āḥ guru thang stong rgyal po siddhi hrīḥ hūṁ hūṁ (p. 3b); and completion stage (p. 3b).

Notes

1. See p. 33 above.

2. Idem.

Chapter 5: The Grub thob thugs tig and other Discovered Treasure Traditions citing Thang-stong rGyal-po as Source

The body of visionary literature entitled Grub thob thugs tig (herein abbreviated GT) is the most extensive representation of what purports to be the teachings of Thang-stong rGyal-po, and yet it is the furthest removed from any historically verifiable link to Thang-stong's own work. The literature, published in three different sections of the Rin chen gter mdzod, is classifed as a Treasure Discovered in the Mind (or, 'Mental Treasure') by 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po (herein abbreviated mKhyen-brtse), the pre-eminent visionary of the eclectic Ris-med movement of 19th century Tibet. It deals with some of the foremost doctrinal and meditational material of the rNying-ma sects, and is of interest in its own right as a source of information on these schools. The validity of its status as a tradition stemming from Thang-stong, however, is unestablished.

Thang-stong's stature in the 19th century visionary sects is clearly illustrated by the GT. The attribution of the GT's inspiration to Thang-stong functioned to establish the system's authenticity, in much the same way that Thang-stong's own traditions sought authentication through the claims of visions of canonical figures. The GT is said to have been preached by the Buddha Samantabhadra,[1] later taught by Padmasaṃbhava to Thang-stong in the latter's visionary trance, and then rehidden and propelled into the future for

mKhyen-brtse's rediscovery. Thang-stong is portrayed in this process as a middleman of sorts, as an intermediary in the GT's mystical transmission. His role as formulator of its content is not stressed; rather, he is an illustrious link in its history.

We currently have no historical basis to connect the GT with any system ascribable to Thang-stong. As we have noted above in Chapter 2, B-1 mentions several occasions on which Thang-stong studied the Māyājāla and other Old Tantras, and received instruction in the rDzogs-chen from Kun-spangs Don-yod rGyal-mtshan and bSod-nams mChog-pa. Thus we have no reason to doubt Thang-stong's knowledge of the canonical systems which are cited as the source of the GT. However this information cannot substantiate the claim that Thang-stong knew the specific content of the GT.

This is not to say however that the role of Thang-stong in the GT should be entirely discounted. It is important to note that visionary figures of the 13th-15th centuries served to inspire the eclectic movements of the last two centuries in Tibet. It is clear from the GT that Thang-stong was viewed by mKhyen-brtse as an ideal personification of the rDzogs-chen master. It was mKhyen-brtse who led the revival of interest in Thang-stong, and compiled and edited the texts of his traditions.[2] Although the historicity of the GT's transmission by Thang-stong may be laid aside, a survey of this material gives an indication of Thang-stong's legacy in Tibetan Buddhism and it is for this reason that it is presented here.

A second purpose for examining the GT literature is that it allows a glimpse of the format, doctrine, and systematization of Tibetan visionary Buddhism in its 19th century form. In the

fragmentary traditions treated in the previous chapters, authentic sources are scarce and circumstances of formulation uncertain. The GT, on the other hand, presents the full array of visionary genres, including the core texts, subsidiary material, exegetical commentaries, and ritual appendices. The circumstances of the vision, and the descriptions of its codification, publication, and introduction to the public are all clearly elucidated. In this way the GT typifies the voluminous visionary cycles of the last two centuries which drew upon the themes of the cryptic revelatory material of the 13th-15th centuries.

However it should not be assumed that the problems connected with the visionary traditions are solved because of the availability and temporal proximity of the material. The same issues of the significance of the revelatory mode and of textual and doctrinal affiliation are still pertinent, and are even more in evidence due to the explicitness of the visionary claims.

The GT consists of three distinct sections, namely: I - the sGrub thabs skor lnga, which presents five sādhanas; II - the guru-accomplishing (bla-sgrub) meditation (no formal title is offered), which is a detailed sādhana of Thang-stong as the primordial guru, and which is considered to be the central teaching of the GT; and III - the Grag 'thung bde gshegs 'dus pa cycle which concerns the eight classes of tutelary deities known as the bKa'-brgyad.

All three sections of the GT are said to be affiliated to the Old Tantras. Specific textual attributions are made on many occasions throughout this literature. We meet most often with the

Guhyagarbhatantra and the other texts from the Māyājāla cycle. The bKa'-brgyad system of the Mahāyoga class of the Old Tantras is the basis for section III. References to the rDzogs-chen are also to be found. The reader should refer to the discussion of the Old Tantras in Chapter 3 above.

The content of the three sections of the GT and their circumstances of formulation differ considerably, but the tradition defines this literature and its basic inspiration as a single unit. The accounts of the history of the GT are presented in two ways; self-authentications included in the core texts; and general descriptions of mKhyen-brtse's formulation of the tradition which are found in the exegetical and supplementary writings of Kong-sprul.

The accounts in the core texts are written in the first person and purport to be the direct words of Thang-stong speaking through the mouth of mKhyen-brtse. Here we find brief "autobiographical" sketches of Thang-stong's career, and the repeated statement that Thang-stong propagated some of his teachings at large, sealed some of them into Whispered Lineages, and hid those teachings for which there were no suitable disciples during his own time for the purpose of future discoverers.[3] The GT is of the last category.

Most of the accounts indicate that the GT was hidden by Thang-stong on Mt. 'O-ba lHa-rtse. In this regard we have one of the few confirmations of the GT's claims in the older literature concerning Thang-stong: B-1 describes his period of retreat on the mountain near his birthplace at 'O-ba lHa-rtse, where he is said to have written texts on rocks and hidden them for future generations to

find.[5] This corroboration is noteworthy, but it does not consistute a substantiation of the GT tradition. We know that B-1 was available to both mKhyen-brtse and Kong-sprul, and it is likely that they depended on its contents for their descriptions of Thang-stong's traditions. Further, the account in B-1 refers to an Earth Treasure, and would not strictly relate to the GT which is by and large labelled as a Mental Treasure.

The core texts of the GT also describe the mechanics of the Mental Treasure transmission. These accounts are of interest in that they constitute one of the few attempts to describe how this transmission occurs. Text GT-I-1 explains the process in psycho-physical yogic terms, stating that after the Great One of Orgyan (Padmasaṁbhava) took control (rjes-su-bzung) of mKhyen-brtse, the wisdom-holding Ḍākinīs entered his nerve channels (rtsa-khams), and the teachings of the GT shined forth in his mind (rgyud la 'char) without any effort on his part.[6] GT-III-1 elaborates on Thang-stong's method of hiding the text: He sealed the GT in a box in the center of space (klong-ldan dbyings kyi sgrom-bu) and sent out ('pho-ba) his blessings that created the causal conditions so that the text would appear in the mind of a future incarnation of himself. Thang-stong then predicts that this incarnation will be mKhyen-brtse (whose other visionary names are also mentioned), to be born 700 years later.

The implication of this metaphorical account is that Thang-stong hid the text in his consciousness for his own use in a future incarnation, a theory which is grounded in the belief in reincarnation. We might note that these accounts follow the traditional outline of Treasure transmission described above in Chapter 3; it is an

interesting addition that the discoverer is portrayed as the reincarnation of the one who hid the text.

Accounts of mKhyen-brtse's discovery of the GT are also presented in the commentaries by Kong-sprul. Here the information is presented from an external point of view. The details vary to some degree, but all the accounts agree that a major inspirational event occurred when mKhyen-brtse was 15 years old, and that he kept the substance of it to himself until he was 47. In GT-I-2 and elsewhere it is stated that mKhyen-brtse, as a youth, saw Thang-stong many times, in reality, dream, and meditative hallucination.[8] GT-III-3 relates a specific event that occurred on September 17, 1834:[9] mKhyen-brtse dreamed of Thang-stong, then awoke to see the master "in reality" in front of him, and received a page from Thang-stong's hand containing the essential points of the GT. This page then dissolved into mKhyen-brtse's body. The account continues that mKhyen-brtse immediately wrote up the core of the guru-accomplishing section of the GT (= GT-II). The other two sections of the GT are said to have been written later, and elements of the successive lineages which mKhyen-brtse had studied to have been incorporated into the work. The essence of this account is also presented in a biographical sketch of mKhyen-brtse.[10]

These statements give us some idea of the process by which such material was translated into written form, and is important for the consideration of the relationship between core texts and the content of the visionary experience. If we can assume that at the age of 15 mKhyen-brtse had a genuine visionary experience, whatever that may mean, it seems that the core text of GT-II was written in

close temporal proximity to that experience. It therefore would represent a visionary document, with the reservation that it may have undergone revisions when mKhyen-brtse published it along with the rest of the GT. Since the core texts of GT-I and III were written 32 years after the vision, and since they include non-visionary material of the successive lineages, they cannot be considered to be in the category of visionary documents. We may say that GT-I and III are based on the visionary inspiration. The use of the gter-shad orthographical device in these two sections indicates only an indirect connection with the vision.

The classification of the GT as a visionary text is problematical; there are several contradictory statements. GT-I and III are referred to as Mental Treasure;[11] GT-II is labelled Pure Vision.[12] The statements on mKhyen-brtse's visionary communication with Thang-stong in dream, reality, and meditative hallucination that are made throughout the GT are reminiscent of the standard definition of Pure Vision.[13] The mention of a written page of text that was given to mKhyen-brtse (which is referred to only in that section of the GT [II] that is labelled Pure Vision) seems to be based on the descriptions of the Discovered Treasure texts. The claim that Thang-stong hid the GT, appointed guardians, and made prophecies of future discovery is also in accordance with the Treasure mode of transmission.

The theory may be advanced that the distinction actually intended is between the visionary experience itself, which is called Pure Vision, and the revealed texts about the Pure Vision, which are

classified as Discovered Treasure. The label Pure Vision would be appropriate for the system of GT-II, since this constitutes a graphic description of mKhyen-brtse's envisioned view of Thang-stong. The descriptions of mKhyen-brtse's vision only state that he "saw Thang-stong." Therefore, we may infer that the icons of the five sādhanas of GT-I and the bKa'-brgyad deities of GT-III are the subject of the revelation, and were not "seen" by mKhyen-brtse during the trance.

The three sections of the GT describe three different approaches to meditation on the guru.[14] GT-III is said to be the basis (rtsa-ba) of the GT, in that it is concerned with the pristine state of the guru, in the form of Thang-stong rGyal-po.[15] GT-I and III are defined as auxilliaries (yan-lag) to the central teaching.

The GT is said to represent a summary of all of the traditions stemming from Thang-stong. The GT's systematization of Thang-stong's teachings as a whole has been outlined above.[16] The internal relation of the sections of the GT, and the overall relation of the GT to the totality of the Thang-stong tradition, is based on the theme of the guru-accomplishing practice (bla-sgrub smin-grol). The soteriological explanation (grol-byed khrid) of this central theme is the four nets system (drva-ba, Skt. jāla) which is a doctrinal device of the Māyājāla. The four nets, similar to the simpler production/completion stage system discussed above,[17] describe successive stages of meditation in terms of their experiential qualities:

1. the production stage, the net of appearance/emptiness (bskyed-rim snang-stong drva-ba)
2. the breath (prāṇa) and heat (yogas), the net of clarity/ emptiness (rlung dang gtum-mo gsal-stong drva-ba)

3. the efficacious path, the net of bliss/emptiness (thabs-lam bde-stong drva-ba)

4. the great completion, the net of primordial awareness (rdzogs-pa chen-po ye-shes drva-ba).[18]

The various traditions of Thang-stong are defined as applications of each of the four nets.[19] The five sādhanas of GT-1 and the bKa'-brgyad practice of GT-III are counted as auxilliaries of the four nets.

GT-1 is presented in the opening volumes of the Rin chen gter mdzod, in the section containing Discovered Treasure systems of indefinite classification concerned with the guru. The five sādhanas describe five aspects of the primordial guru: the peaceful Padmasaṁbhava; the wrathful Padmasaṁbhava; Avalokiteśvara; Hayagrīva; and Vajravārāhī. The visualization system of these sādhanas is simple and concise, and constitutes an introduction to the complex visualization schemes of GT-II and III.

The practices of the five sādhanas are said to employ the four nets, and to embody the philosophy of the Mahāyoga, Anuyoga, and Atiyoga.[20] The five sādhanas proceed along the standard outline of Tibetan sādhanas: preliminary practices (sngon-'gro); production stage (bskyed-rim); invitation of the 'actual wisdom being' into the 'visualized image' (dam-ye dbyer-med); chanting of the mantra (sngags-bzlas); completion stage (rdzogs-rim); and Carry-over practice (lam-khyer).[21]

The following texts constitute the literature of GT-I:

GT-I-1: *sGrub thabs snying po skor lnga*.

Published in *Rin chen gter mdzod*, vol. 4, pp. 449-580.

Genre: Core text (*rtsa-gzhung*).

Text marked with orthographical device of *gter-shad*.

Content:
(Introduction) (p. 450):
Account of Thang-stong's life; description of the GT and its three parts of which this is the first; statement of its uniquely profound characteristics; history of mKhyen-brtse's (here called Padma mDo-ngags Gling-pa) realization of the text as Mental Treasure (*dgongs-gter*); statement concerning mKhyen-brtse's credentials.

The remainder of the text forms the content of the five sādhanas:

a) *Bla ma zhi ba'i sgrub thabs* (p. 453).

Content: Meditative means of accomplishing the guru in peaceful aspect (*bla-ma zhi-ba*) as Padmasaṁbhava with consort. Includes references to the *Guhyatantra* (p. 453) and rDzogs-chen (p. 454), and makes doctrinal statements in accordance with these systems. This and the following sādhanas are of the visualization as-self (*bdag-bskyed*) variety.

b) *Bla ma drag po'i sgrub thabs* (p. 465).

Content: Meditative means of accomplishing the guru in wrathful aspect (*bla-ma drag-po*) as Padma Drag-po with consort Vajravārāhī.

c) *'Gro 'dul 'phags pa'i sgrub thabs* (p. 48).

Content: Meditative means of accomplishing Avalokiteśvara, with complex arrangement of deities in the psycho-physical centers (*cakra*) in the body.

d) *rTa mchog rol pa'i sgrub thabs* (p. 487).

Content: Meditative means of accomplishing Hayagrīva, the wrathful aspect of Avalokiteśvara. Statement (p. 500) of affiliation to the *dBang chen rol pa'i rgyud* from the section of wrathful practices in the *Padmajālatantra*

e) *rDo rje phag mo'i sgrub thabs* (p. 501).

Content: Meditative means of accomplishing Vajravārāhī.

f) Kun gyi kha skong phrin las (p. 521).

Content: Appendix (kha-skong) of propitiatory activities (phrin-las), including offerings to the host of deities (tshogs-mchod), "moving of the heart" propitiations (thugs-dam bskul-ba), offerings of consecrated cakes (gtor-ma), and confession of sins (nongs bshags).

g) dBang bskur yang snying kun 'dus (p. 542).

Content: Initiatory ritual (dbang-bskur) for the Grub thabs skor-lnga.

Concluding statement (p. 577) of textual affiliation with the path (lam-rim) of the Guhyagarbhatantra of the Māyājāla.

GT-I-2: sGrub thabs snying po skor lnga'i phrin las dang dbang gi gsal byed mdor bsdus pa.

By Padma Gar-dbang Blo-gros mTha'-yas (= Kong-sprul).

Published in Rin chen gter mdzod, vol. 4, pp. 581-598.

Genre (labelled in margin): Notes for practice ('don-zin).

Content: a) An elaboration and explanation of the basic text (gzhung, = GT-I-1) concerning the peaceful Padmasambhava, with maṇḍala of the eight forms of Padmasambhava (p. 582 seq.); b) Outline of the initiation ritual for the five sādhanas, including history of mKhyen-brtse's receipt of the system and discussion of the varying functions of each of the five practices (p. 587 seq.).

Statement (pp. 589-590) identifying the textual affiliation of GT-I with the Vajrasattva-Māyājāla-Guhyagarbhatantra.

GT-I-3: sGrub thabs snying po skor lnga'i gdams pa'i sa bcad zin thor bkod pa ngo mtshar snying po.

By Blo-gros mTha'-yas (= Kong-sprul)

Published in Rin chen gter mdzod, vol. 4, pp. 599-612.

Genre (labelled in margin): Explanatory notes (khrid-zin).

Content: Outline of Thang-stong's lCags-zam path as a whole.[22] Explanation of the structural and doctrinal position of GT-I in terms of the Guyhagarbhatantra, exposition on the nature of meditative

absorption (samādhi), the production and completion stages in visualization, the Carry-over practices, and the four nets of the Māyājāla.

The guru-accomplishing practice (bla-sgrub) forms Section II of the GT, as contained in these texts:

GT-II-1: Phrin las ye shes snying po.

Published in Rin chen gter mdzod, vol. 17, pp. 167-180.

Genre (labelled in margin): Core text (rtsa-gzhung).

Text marked with orthographical device of the gter-shad.

Content: Visualization and invocation of the primordial guru as Thang-stong, involving complex arrangement of deities in the psycho-physical centers; doctrinal identification of Thang-stong with 'basic reality' according to the system of the Māyājāla.

Statement (p. 179) that this text represents a Pure Vision.

GT-II-2: Tshe sgrub 'chi med snying po.

Published in Rin chen gter mdzod, vol. 17, pp. 181-186.

Genre: Core text. Labelled in margin: Means of life extension (tshe-sgrub).

Text employs the orthographical device of gter-shad.

Content: Visualization of the guru as Padmasaṁbhava, involving meditative means to increase the life span through visualization of the guru granting practitioner the "vase initiation" (bum-pa), nectar (amṛta), and pills which increase the life span.

GT-II-3: sMin byed kyi lag len khrigs su bsdebs pa legs bshad snying po.

By Padma Gar-gyi dBang-phyug (= Kong-sprul)

Published in Rin chen gter mdzod, vol. 17, pp. 187-216.

Content: Initiation for the practice of GT-II-1, including a report on mKhyen-brtse's vision of the system (p. 189 seq.), and instructions

for performing the initiatory rite (p. 191 seq.), with visualization of Thang-stong as-self in five forms according to five classes (gotra), five psycho-physical centers, five initiations, and five results.

Statement (p. 189) identifying this system to be Pure Vision, and neither Spoken Transmission nor Discovered Treasure. Identification of the initiation as belonging to the Atiyoga (p. 196).

GT-II-4: Tshe sgrub 'chi med snying po'i mtshams sbyor bdud rtsi'i snying po.

By Blo-gros mTha-'yas (= Kong-sprul).

Published in Rin chen gter mdzod, vol. 17, pp. 217-228.

Genre (labelled in margin): Initiation for long life (tshe-dbang).

Content: Initiation ritual granting the power (siddhi) of long life, wherein each of the participants visualize themselves as Thang-stong.

GT-II-5: Man ngag rdo rje'i tshig rkang.

Published in Rin chen gter mdzod, vol. 17, pp. 229-231.

Genre: Vajrapada. Label in margin: Explanatory core (khrid-rtsa).

Text employs orthographical device of gter-shad.

Content: Outline of practice according to the categories of preparatory stage (sngon); actual practice (dngos) involving view (lta-ba), meditation (sgom-pa), practice (spyod-pa), effective path (thabs-lam), and result ('bras-bu); and conclusion (rjes).

Section III of the GT describes the eight wrathful, "blood-drinking" manifestations of the guru, known under the general rubric of bKa'-brgyad. The bKa'-brgyad forms a major section of the Mahāyoga class of the Old Tantras, and recent studies have suggested that it is one of the few systems that may be historically traced to Padmasaṃbhava.[23] That the bKa'-brgyad constitutes the practical counterpart (sgrub-sde) of the theoretical Mahāyoga tantras (rgyud-sde) of the

Māyājāla has been discussed above in Chapter 3.

An outline of the traditional history of the bKa'-brgyad teaching is presented in GT-III-3. This account links the GT version with the canonical recension. We are told that the basic maṇḍala of the bKa'-brgyad originates in the Akaniṣṭha realm, with the primordial Buddha Samantabadhra. Ten basic tantras were generated, compiled by rDo-rje Chos (Skt. *Vajradharma) and entrusted to the Ḍākinīs who hid the text in a stūpa in a cemetery called Dur-khrod bSil-ba'i Tshal. Later the Eight Wisdom Holders (rig-'dzin brgyad) were invited to receive the teaching, and the "outer tantra" was transmitted by Padma Thod-phreng rtsal (one of the eight forms of Padmasaṁbhava) to his twenty-five disciples at bSam-yas mChims-phu in Tibet.[24]

The particular link of the GT to this tradition is elaborated in GT-III-1, where Thang-stong himself relates the origin of his teaching on the bKa'-brgyad. We are told that Thang-stong received it from Padmasaṁbhava as Padma Heruka in the palace on Zang-mdog dPal-ri Mountain in rNga-yab-gling. At this time Thang-stong met the host of the blood-drinking Tathāgatas and received the full initiation and precepts. The text describes the major teachings of Thang-stong, the process of their condensation into the GT, and the propulsion of the entire GT 700 years into the future as the authoritative transmission to mKhyen-brtse.[25]

This account follows the standard lines of description of visionary transmission. What is striking, although not indicated in the text, is that the GT is being attributed to the same visionary event as is Thang-stong's 'Chi med dpal gter.[26] This is further illustration of mKhyen-brtse's familiarity with the earlier

material and his utilization of it for the authentication of the GT. We saw above that the 'Chi med dpal ster seemed to have little relation to the content of the visionary event described as its origin. Here we find that the GT is being presented by mKhyen-brtse as the content of that vision. However there is presently no literary or other evidence that the GT existed in any form prior to mKhyen-brtse's rendition.

The following texts constitute the bKa'-brgyad teachings of GT-III:

GT-III-1: Grag 'thung bde gshegs 'dus pa.

Published in Rin chen gter mdzod, vol. 24, pp. 261-365.

Genre: Core text.

Text marked by orthographical device of gter-shad.

Content: Identification of the text as being the instructions (gdams-ngag) and precepts on the bKa'-brgyad which Thang-stong received from Padmasaṁbhava in rNga-yab Gling (p. 262); instructions for the production stage of the maṇḍala of the eight classes of blood-drinking Tathāgatas of which the central figure is Che-mchog Heruka (p. 262); mantras and invocations (p. 292); the completion stage (p. 295); initiation (p. 302); six functional practices (las-drug) for a visualized and magical implementation of the special activities ('phrin-las) of the deities of the maṇḍala (p. 324).

Includes embedded text entitled: (Skt.) Herukasarvatathāgatasaṁgrahatantrapragarbha, (Tib.) Grag 'thung bde gshegs 'dus pa'i rgyud kyi yang snying (pp. 356:4-358:2). This text is said to have been preached by Kun-bzang Che-mchog Heruka to an audience "not different than himself" at the behest of gNam-zhal Caṇḍalī. This text followed by a statement of permission (lung) to practice the system by Vajrapradharma (p. 358); and a statement of the authenticity (nges-shes skyed-pa'i lung-byang) of the system by Padma including a biographical sketch of Thang-stong and the history of the GT's transmission to mKhyen-brtse.

Colophon identifies the text as an authoritative transmission (bka'-babs) received by Padma 'Od-gsal mDo-sngags Gling-pa (= mKhyen-brtse).

Lineage (p. 365):

(Dharmakāya) Samantabhadra
(Sambhogakāya) Che-mchog Heruka
(Śāstṛ) Vajrasattva
(Guhyakādhipati) Vajrapāṇi
(Ḍākinī) Karmeśvara
(Condensed Essence of the Eight Wisdom Holders) Padmasaṁbhava
(Mahāsiddha) Thang-stong rGyal-po

GT-III-2: Grag 'thung bde gshegs 'dus pa'i las byang bklags chog tu bkod pa dngos grub kun 'dus.

By Padma Gar-dbang Blo-gros mTha'-yas (= Kong-sprul).

Published in Rin chen gter mdzod, vol. 24, pp. 367-396.

Genre: Functional practice (las-byang).

Content: Instructions for practicing the Grag 'thung bde gshegs 'dus pa system, including preliminaries (p. 368); actual practice, visualization of the maṇḍala, and meditative assumption of special powers (p. 375); and conclusion (p. 268).

GT-III-3: Grags 'thung bde gshegs 'dus pa'i dbang bskur bklags chog tu bkod pa byin rlabs bcud 'dus.

By Padma Gar-dbang Blo-gros mTha'-yas (= Kong-sprul).

Published in Rin chen gter mdzod, vol. 24, pp. 397-449.

Genre (labelled in margin): Initiation (dbang-chog).

Content: Initiatory rite for the Grag ' thung bde gshegs 'dus pa system, based on visionary material supplied by mKhyen-brtse. Account of the history of the system (p. 402 seq.).

GT-III-4: Grag 'thung bde gshegs 'dus pa'i tshom bu tshogs sgrub kyi lag len gsal bar bkod pa rig 'dzin dgyes pa'i rol mo.

By Padma dGar-dbang Phrin-las 'Gro-'dul rTsal (= Kong-sprul).

Published in Rin chen gter mdzod, vol. 24, pp. 451-490.

Genre (labelled in margin): Central accomplishment (sgrub-khog).

Content: Instructions for the rituals of propitiation and offerings for the host of deities (tshogs-'khor) of this system. Synopsis of differing varieties of the ritual for other purposes.

GT-III-5: Grag 'thung bde gshegs 'dus pa'i sman grub lag len 'dus gsal bkod pa bdud rtsi'i zhun thigs.

By Padma Gar-gyi dBang-phyug rTsal (= Kong-sprul).

Published in Rin chen gter mdzod, vol. 24, pp. 491-547.

Genre (labelled in margin): Accomplishment of medical functions (sman-sgrub).

Content: Instructions for performing rites with medicinal functions, using the maṇḍala of the Grag 'thung bde gshegs 'dus pa system described in GT-III-4. Includes a general theory of medicine according to the five classes of Buddhas and the five psycho-physical groups (skandha), along with instructions on the ingredients of specific medicines.

GT-III-6: Grag 'thung bde gshegs 'dus pa'i srung zlog gi las rim gsal bas bkod pa khro chen stobs 'dus.

By Padma Gar-dbang 'Phrin-las 'Gro-'dul rTsal (= Kong-sprul).

Published in Rin chen gter mdzod, vol. 25, pp. 1-51.

Genre: Protection and aversion (srung-zlog).

Content: Ritualized visualization for the magical protection (srung) of the practitioner, aversion (zlog) of evil, and slaying (bsad) of demons, according to the maṇḍala of the Grag 'thung bde gshegs 'dus pa.

GT-III-7: Grag 'thung bde gshegs 'dus pa'i rgyud lung gi tshig 'grel mdor bsdus pa legs bshad sgo 'byed.

By Padma Gar-dbang Blo-gros mTha'-yas (= Kong-sprul).

Published in Rin chen gter mdzod, vol. 25, pp. 53-91.

Genre (labelled in margin): Commentary to the tantra (rgyud-'grel).

Content: Explanation of doctrinal and philosophical terms in the Treasure Book (GT-III-1), including a discussion of the nature of mind (sems), path (lam), meditation (sgom), and result ('bras-bu).

Also includes a discussion of the transmission, authenticity, and structure of the Grag 'thung bde gshegs 'dus pa system. Quotes the explanatory tantra (bshad-rgyud) of the Māyājāla, and the gSang ba yongs rdzogs chen po rgyud.

GT-III-8: Grag 'thung bde gshegs 'dus pa las rim lnga'i khrid yig zab lam snying po.

By 'Chi-med bsTan-gnyis gYung-drung Gling-pa.

Published in Rin chen gter mdzod, vol. 25, pp. 93-115.

Genre (labelled in margin): Explanatory writing (khrid-yig).

Content: Explanation of the five parts of the completion stage for the Grag 'thung bde gshegs 'dus pa cycle, viz., mantra (sngags), meditation on mind (sems), illusory body (sgyu-lus), clear light ('od-gsal), and integration (zung-'jug).

Finally, a short text describing the lineage of the GT was inserted at the beginning of GT-II in volume 17 of the Rin chen gter mdzod, but due to its general nature which does not specifically relate to any of the three sections, it has been repositioned here as an appendix to the GT:

GT-0: dGongs gter grub thob chen po'i thugs thig gi brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs.

By Blo-gros mTha'-yas (= Kong-sprul).

Published in Rin chen gter mdzod, vol. 17, p. 165.

Genre: Supplication to the lineage (brgyud-'debs).

Content: Supplication for the realizations that result from the practice of the systems of Thang-stong.

Lineage:

Amitābha (sNang-ba mTha'-yas)
Avalokiteśvara
Hayagrīva
Padmasaṁbhava Thod-phreng rTsal

Thang-stong rGyal-po
'Od-gsal sPrul-ba'i rDo-rje (= mKhyen-brtse).[27]

Notwithstanding the rather loose connecting theme of the guru in the GT, it should be reiterated in conclusion that the principal unifying factor of this literature is its claim of visionary inspiration from Thang-stong. In the same tradition in which Thang-stong himself cited authentication for his meditation systems in canonically established sources, mKhyen-brtse claimed the Mahāsiddha Thang-stong as the mystical and spiritual source for his visionary system. Keeping in mind that mKhyen-brtse and Kong-sprul were the redactors of the voluminous collection of visionary Buddhism, the Rin chen gter mdzod, we may understand that the legends surrounding Thang-stong and the other visionaries in Tibetan Buddhism were the prototypes for mKhyen-brtse and Kong-sprul's own deep involvement in the visionary movement. mKhyen-brtse is said to have received seven major visionary transmissions (bka'-'babs ldun-ldan),[28] and his Discovered Treasure and Pure Vision systems span the major practices and doctrines of the rNying-ma school.

We know that mKhyen-brtse had a crucial role in the collection and revival of almost all of the traditions of Thang-stong discussed in the foregoing chapters, and was well versed in all of the information on Thang-stong available in his time. This familiarity is further evidenced by the fact that what were simple statements in Thang-stong's biographies and other literature were often borrowed, expanded, and linked to mKhyen-brtse's own elaborate visionary systems. In this way he was able to forge an illustrious position in the

legacy of Thang-stong, thereby adding to his status as a visionary in his own right.

Other Revelatory Literature on the Teachings of Thang-stong

Two short Mental Treasure texts on the teachings of Thang-stong, similar to the GT in the visionary claims that are made therein, may be listed here. The first is related to the Klong chen snying thig, the major visionary system of 'Jigs-med Gling-pa (1729/30-1798).[29] The passage concerning Thang-stong is said to be a vision experienced by Klong-chen Nam-mkha' rNal-'byor while he was in meditative retreat in a cave near mChims-phu.

MT-1: (rJe grub thob chen pos klong chen nam mkha' rnal 'byor la dag snang du stsal ba) Thugs rje byams pa'i man ngag 'gro ba'i srog 'dzin.

Published in 'Jigs-med Gling-pa, Klong chen snying thig gi chos skor, vol. 3, pp. 596-600.

Content: Description of a Pure Vision of Thang-stong, and reproduction of the teaching he bestowed (in verse). Includes a definition of the name Thang-stong rGyal-po in terms of compassion for sentient beings, and a description of the Three Jewels using the simile of a boat.

Another Mental Treasure concerning Thang-stong is by brTul-zhugs Gling-pa, a lesser known visionary, who was born in 1916 in Golok, Tibet and died in Sikkim in 1965. Two texts, part of his Treasure cycle called Klong gsal dgongs pa'i snying thig, are published along with other visionary systems in his collected works:

MT-2-a: Klong gsal dgongs pa'i snying thig zab mo las thang stong rgyal po'i bla sgrub dngos grub gter mdzod. (Short title: Thang stong snyan brgyud).

Published in brTul-zhugs Gling-pa, Collected Revelations and Writings, pp. 183-195.

Content: A guru-accomplishing practice (bla-sgrub) that prescribes visualization of Thang-stong and the chanting of various mantras.

MT-2-b: Klong gsal dgongs pa'i snying thig zab mo las thang stong bla sgrub sngags 'bum dkar po dgos 'byung nor bu'i gter mdzod. (Short title: sNgags 'bum dkar po.)

Published in brTul-zhugs Gling-pa, Collected Revelations and Writings, pp. 197-227.

Content: Collection of mantras connected to the guru-accomplishing practice on Thang-stong of MT-2-a.

Notes

1. GT-III-3, p. 402. The core text Herukasarvatathāgatasamgrahatantrapragarbha embedded in GT-III-1 was preached by Samantabhadra as Chemchog Heruka. See GT-III-1, p. 356.

2. See discussion of mKhyen-brtse and Kong-sprul's roles in the eclectic movement, p. 12 above.

3. See GT-I-1, p. 450 seq.; GT-III-1, p. 359 seq.; and GT-III-3, p. 402 seq.

4. Other hiding places mentioned are rDo-rje Brag and bSam-yas mChims-phu.

5. B-1, pp. 65-70.

6. P. 452.

7. Pp. 352-353.

8. P. 589.

9. P. 190 seq.

10. gTer-rnam, p. 671. Another section of the GT is mentioned here which has not been seen elsewhere: the rDzogs rim drug gi rtsa tshig.

11. As in GT-I-1, p. 453 and GT-III-3, p. 404.

12. As in GT-II-3, pp. 189-90.

13. See p. 72 above.

14. The Rin chen gter mdzod is broadly divided into three sections of which the teachings on the guru (bla) is the first. The other two sections are teachings concerning the doctrines of rDzogs-chen (rdzogs), and the teachings concerning mind (thugs).

15. As stated in GT-I-1, p. 451, and elsewhere.

16. See pp. 89-90 above.

17. Cf. discussion of production and completion stages in the 'Gro don mkha' khyab ma, p. 115 seq. above.

18. GT-I-3, pp. 600-1.

19. See pp. 89-90 above.

20. See GT-I-3 throughout, especially pp. 606-607.

21. These stages standard for Vajrayāna sādhanas. See discussion with relation to the _'Gro don mkha' khyab ma_ above, p. 112 seq.

22. See pp. 89-90 above.

23. See Eva Dargyay, _Rise of Esoteric Buddhism in Tibet_, p. 31 seq.

24. P. 402 seq.

25. P. 359 seq.

26. This is in fact the missing link in the description of the visionary origin of the _'Chi med dpal ster_ (see p. 148 seq. above) as related in CM-1, CM-2, B-1 and B-3. In all of these accounts the bKa'-brgyad teachings are briefly mentioned as the teaching Thang-stong received during his visionary journey to rNga-yab Gling. Yet as discussed above, most of these accounts fail to mention the life extension teachings of the _Chi med dpal ster_. In light of these claims, it seems probable that the _'Chi med dpal ster_ is considered to be a subsidiary system based on the bKa'-brgyad. Such an affiliation might also explain why the _'Chi med dpal ster_ is not listed as one of the major teachings of Thang-stong in GT-I-3, since it is to be classified under the rubric of the bKa'-brgyad. In terms of doctrine there is no immediate evidence to connect the simple visualization of the _'Chi med dpal ster_ to the complex maṇḍala of the bKa'-brgyad, except the very general element of guru-meditation which is common to both. It should also be noted that Amitāyus is classified in the Padma sNying-thig section of the bKa'-brgyad, according to the systematization of the _Rin chen gter mdzod_. See _dKar-chag_, p. 200 seq.; description of the _'Chi med dpal ster_ on p. 206.

27. It should be noted that this lineage is the same as that of the _'Chi med dpal ster_. This serves to further substantiate the connection of the CM to the GT.

28. His hagiography in _sNga 'gyur byung tshul_, chapter 6; translated by Dargyay, _Rise of Esoteric Buddhism_, pp. 197-209.

29. Described by Steven Goodman, "The _Klong-chen sNying-thig_ of 'Jigs-med Gling-pa."

Conclusions

The literary traditions connected to Thang-stong rGyal-po typify a movement in Tibetan religion that may be labelled visionary Buddhism. This movement was a development of the trend begun in Indian Buddhism whereby new scriptures said to have been preached by Śākyamuni Buddha were formulated by disciples "inspired by the Buddha's power" centuries after his demise. In Tibet the introduction of new canonical material based on vision coincided with the loss of the Indic supply of Buddhist scriptures in the early centuries of this millenium, and represented an attempt to re-establish direct contact with the spiritual source of Buddhism.

The characteristic features of the traditions of visionary Buddhism are origin in revelation, and a meditational or philosophical innovation. These features contrast with the Tibetan exegetical traditions which were the product of study and intellectual thought, and which consisted in the interpretation and analysis of existing doctrines.

The visionary systems were said to have originated in a revelatory trance in which the Buddhas and other figures from the classical traditions would come to life and communicate directly with the seer. A dialogue between the visionary and the envisioned would occur, often in a mythical environment traditionally established as the expositor's Buddha field, and would include a special preaching

of Buddhism. Thus the content of the vision was patterned upon that of the sūtras and tantras.

In that the vision was said to occur spontaneously, attributed not to the efforts of the visionary but rather to the divine purposes of the celestial expositor, it should be differentiated from the techniques of visualization which were also described in the Buddhist texts. The roots of both spontaneous theophany and deliberate visualization of the Buddha can be observed in the sūtras. However the two trends were quite distinct in tantric Buddhism, where visualization became a structured meditative process in which the practitioner imagined himself to have been transformed into a Buddha or Bodhisattva and to have assumed the state of enlightenment. The visions, on the other hand, involved the intrusion of such an experience into the consciousness of the practitioner, and could occur at any time or place. Although the material learnt in a vision might be codified into a new method for visualization, the vision itself was of a specialized character that was theoretically related to the level of spiritual advancement of the "recipient."

The vision functioned as the authentication of all of its ensuing literary transformations. Since a revelation consisted of the actual words of the Buddha, it was automatically to be accorded a venerated status to a degree that exegetical material could never achieve.

The individual who could demonstrate access to the ultimate source of Buddhism was for that reason accorded a special status in the Tibetan context. The lCags-zam tradition recounts numerous instances when Thang-stong converted the sceptics by flying, mustering

exceptional strength, magically producing an image of a Buddha or an emanation of his own body, and displaying other thaumaturgical powers. Thang-stong's discoveries of iron ore, development of smelting techniques, and construction of iron chain suspension bridges were also attributed by the tradition to visionary instruction. Thus his engineering feats contributed to his elevation to the status of realized master.

These accounts are in keeping with the basic assumptions of a culture that was eager to recognize the individual with special access to the otherworldly realms. The Buddhist visionary was in some ways similar to the shamanic priest, the latter having long been a part of Tibetan society. The elements of trance and communication with transcendent spirits were common to both traditions, as was the role of the medium who transmits the message of the gods. It is also significant that the visions of Thang-stong were in almost all cases said to occur during a long period of meditative retreat, clearly parelleling the shamanic practices of ascetic retreat and repetitious chanting in the vision quest. We may conclude that the charismatic visionary was an intimate part of the cultural milieu in which Thang-stong and his visions could gain credence.

The Buddhist content of the revelation provided an important type of authorization for the visionary systems. Authentication was effected through the vision's affiliation to the established canonical textual traditions. The majority of the visionary systems cited one of the tantras as the primary referent, for reasons that reflect the tantras' own origination in mystical circumstances and their suitability to the esoteric subjects most often associated with

vision and trance. It is difficult, however, to determine the significance of the emphasis that occurred on specific tantras without a broad investigation of other visionary systems, and the indications of textual affiliation merits further study as a whole.

It is generally accepted that the Old Tantra class forms the authenticating canonical referent for the majority of the Tibetan visionary systems. Later adherents to the legacy of Thang-stong have followed this thinking by connecting his teachings to the Guhyagarbha and other texts of the Māyājāla cycle, and to the rDzogs-chen, all part of the Old Tantra system. However, such statements are too recent to establish a verifiable link to Thang-stong's own thought. Although mentioned in the earlier sources as being among his subjects of study as a youth, it cannot be determined how deeply he was influenced by the Old Tantra system without the existence of his own writings on the subject.

Our findings indicate that Thang-stong's systems include elements from both the Old and New Tantras. The 'Chi med dpal ster seems to be primarily linked to the Old Tantras, as does the Siṁhamukhā system of meditation. The characters of the Cakrasaṁvara, a New Tantra, appear prominently in other of Thang-stong's traditions. We have also found that the cult of the Ḍākinīs, which is connected to both tantric canons, influenced his work: his gCod system is based on a vision of the Ḍākinī Vajravārāhī, his version of the Shangs-pa teachings originates with a vision of the Ḍākinī Niguma, and there are numerous visions of other female figures of this sort reported in his biographies.

The systems of meditation or doctrine communicated in the

vision were codified into literary form either by the visionary himself or by his followers. However, this codification was preceded by a period in which the material was passed down in oral form, due to a set of traditional beliefs that held the personal communication between teacher and disciple to be a more authentic transmission than was possible through the written word. This practice makes for special problems in determining the authors of this literature. There were proscriptions against any written form of a teaching for a specified number of generations of disciples, which resulted in a situation where we often have only late and secondary representations of the teachings of Thang-stong.

The earliest layer of this literature may sometimes be identified as the visionary core text. The core texts are of several distinct genres. The visionary document consists of the revelatory sermon itself. This genre is illustrated in Thang-stong's traditions by the Treasure Books of the Grub thob thugs tig and the Vajrapada of the gSang spyod snyan brgyud. These texts, written in the first person, present the words of the Buddha or Bodhisattva on the doctrine and philosophical position of the system. The visionary documents are anonymous, and even the commentaries studiously avoid discussing their authors. Thus the attribution of the visionary documents is problematical; at most, an early reference or commentary can establish the terminus ad quem.

A subsidiary type of visionary core text is what the tradition labels the 'ancient writing,' examples of which are Thang-stong's 'Gro don mkha' khyab ma and 'Chi med dpal ster. This genre is said to be the first written form of the visionary system. By comparing

the ancient writings' content to that of the vision as described by the tradition, we have found that these texts do not represent the vision itself but instead are based on the vision in some way. Most of the ancient writings lack colophons, but we usually find a descriptive phrase in the title or in the commentaries which indicates the text's human, rather than divine, authorship.

The exegesis of the vision written by the visionary himself is also accorded a special status by virtue of its author's connection to the revelation. The works of Thang-stong that fall into this category also incorporate material from the established successive transmission. The visionary exegeses are accompanied by a colophon identifying the author, time and location of composition, and purpose for being written, in the same manner as in the Tibetan non-visionary exegetical works.

We have found that those texts most closely representing the vision are most likely to be anonymous, and that the more a text is interpretative and removed from the visionary content, the more likely it is to indicate author and the circumstances of composition. Anonymity and visionary status are in fact concomitant, in that the major claim that the truly visionary literature is making is that it was spoken by the Buddha or Bodhisattva, and is not the product of human composition. The acceptability of the innovations of the visionary system rested on the system's ability to present itself on a level similar to that of the Buddhist sūtras or tantras. This explains the visionary document's essential characteristics of being attributed to an enlightened source, being anonymous as regards human author, and being patterned on the style and content of the

canonical texts.

Some of the literature labelled "Teaching of Thang-stong rGyal-po," or "System Directly Transmitted to Thang-stong" was authored by a member of the lineage centuries after the Siddha's death. That such literature was accepted not only as authentically representing Thang-stong's original teaching, but also as carrying the special "blessings" associated with material realized in a vision, indicates the flexibility that was allowed in the transmission of visionary Buddhism. These later authors tended to incorporate the core text, and their modifications usually took the form of additional liturgical and structural elements in order to adapt the system to a particular ritual or function.

Several of the literary cycles connected to Thang-stong cannot historically be demonstrated to originate in his teachings, but arise instead out of his legend or myth. In the 19th century Thang-stong was one of the patron saints of the eclectic Ris-med movement and the revival of visionary Buddhism in Tibet. We have seen that the legacy of Thang-stong the visionary, Treasure discoverer, Siddha, and saviour inspired the voluminous philosophical and meditational material of the Grub thob thugs tig Mental Treasure. In this system Thang-stong becomes the enlightened expositor of the visionary documents, and the whole pattern of revelation preached by a recognized member of the Buddhist pantheon and communicated in core texts, manuals of meditation, and exegetical works based on the vision repeats itself once again. However, it is now not Thang-stong who is seeking authentication; rather he has become the source of it

for others, and his work the subject of their visionary inquiry.

The final questions to be answered by this study concern how Thang-stong's operation within the framework and patterns of visionary Buddhism was unique, and what specific contributions to Tibetan Buddhism were made. The traditions of Thang-stong that are extant in the current body of Tibetan literature represent a variety of textual and sectarian affiliations, and a variety of visionary genres. To attempt to single out a principle which defines the work of Thang-stong is tenuous, and in many ways the foremost contribution of this study has been simply to depict and analyze the patterns of a typical visionary corpus. However the issue which appears to be of most significance is Thang-stong's concern to make his teachings accessible to a wide audience. Such an orientation is not unique in Tibetan Buddhist traditions in general, but it is in fact quite rare for the usually complex and strictly esoteric revelatory cycles. The primary contribution of Thang-stong's 'Gro don mkha' khyab ma is its simplification of the complex Tibetan Avalokiteśvara meditation tradition. The same theme describes his long-life initiation of the 'Chi med dpal ster, as well as his Vajradhara meditation. Although the other traditions of Thang-stong are not particularly oriented toward the presentation of profundity in a simple and concise format, the concern for accessibility can be argued to be a major theme of his work.

This contribution is best illustrated by Thang-stong's extensive bridge construction in Tibet, perhaps his most well known accomplishment. Thang-stong's involvement in public works is portrayed by the tradition as a reflection of his connection to the cult

of Avalokiteśvara and the Bodhisattva's vow to help sentient beings. From the historical perspective we can add that Thang-stong's unique career was a result of his personal reaction to the political centralization and institutional standardization that was occurring during his lifetime. His rebelliousness towards authority and what he saw to be empty scholasticism, coupled with a commitment to the authentic religious experience, led to his attempts to maintain direct contact with the spiritual sources of Buddhism. His esoteric Shangs-pa and gCod systems are a product of his involvement with the yogic lifestyle of extended retreat periods. However he was also aware of the usefulness of the spiritual figure in his politically turbulent era, and particularly in the latter part of his life he came down from the mountain as it were, and devoted his efforts to engineering projects in public transportation and to the propagation of Buddhism on a large scale. It is also during this later period that he formulated his simplified Avalokiteśvara and Amitāyus systems, both of which are still transmitted in many sects of Tibetan Buddhism, no doubt due to their public accessibility and broad appeal.

APPENDIX: DISCOVERED TREASURE TEXTS ATTRIBUTED TO THANG-STONG RGYAL-PO

	Title*	Site of Discovery	Source of Report
1.	Thugs sgrub yang gsang bla med Dharma cycle.	The red temple (lha-khang dmar-po) at Gram-pa rGyang	B-1, p. 76
	Thugs sgrub yang gsang bla med Dharma cycle.	Gram-pa lJongs	B-4, p. 540
2.	The Essential Droplet of the Mind of Urgyan (Urgyan thugs kyi yang tig) Kun bzang dgongs pa chig 'dus.	Zla-ba Phug	B-1, p. 115
3.	The Mahāsiddha (Thang-stong)'s own Dharma-lot (including) Dus gsum bla ma spyi sgrub chig dril; Yi dam kun 'dus dngos grub lab bcangs; mKha' 'gro gsang mdzod 'phrin las lhun grub; Dam can bka' srung dregs pa tshar gcod sde brgyad bran 'khol; sNang srid dbang bsdud; (comprising) five rolls of paper	bSam-yas mChims-phu	B-1, p. 116
	Tshe sgrub 'chi med dpal ster, etcetera, five rolls of Treasure texts	bSam-yas mChims-phu	B-4, p. 540
	'Chi med dpal ster, among five Discovered Treasures.	bSam-yas mChims-phu	Bod du byung ba'i gsang sngags, p. 190
4.	The Mahāsiddha's own prophesied Zhing skyong gi sgrub thabs.	Tsa-ri'i Zer-chen Phug	B-1, p. 220
	The Mahāsiddha's own prophesied Zhing skyong gi sgrub thabs.	Tsā-ri Zil-chen Phug	B-4, p. 540

*Where unknown if descriptive phrase or title, the Tibetan is enclosed in parentheses and English translation is given.

Title	Site of Discovery	Source of Report
5. The Mahāsiddha's own prophesied gSal ba'i sgron me.	Tsa-ri'i Zer-chen Phug	B-1, p. 220
The Mahāsiddha's own prophesied gSal ba'i sgron me.	Tsā-ri Zil-chen Phug	B-4, p. 540
6. Mental Treasure cycles concerning the profound Dharma (Zab chos thugs gter skor rnams).	Tsā-ri gSang-sngags Pho-brang	B-4, p. 540
7. Man ngag rin chen gter spungs.	sGrub-mtsho Padma Gling	B-4, p. 540
8. Instructions which are the key to magic (Man ngag 'phrul gyi lde mig) in a Dharma Treasure roll of paper of ten fathoms, the profound meaning of all sūtras and mantras (mDo sngags thams cad kyi zab don), his own Dharma-lot.	Pa-gro sTag-tshang	B-5, p. 131a
A roll of paper of ten fathoms, in which was arranged the profound key to all sūtras and tantras (mDo rgyud thams cad kyi zab gnad).	Pa-gro U-rgyan Chen-po'i sTag-tshang	B-1, p. 164
A roll of paper of ten fathoms, into which was rolled the profound key to all sūtras and tantras (mDo rgyud thams cad kyi zab gnad.	Mon sPa-gro sTag-tshang	B-4, p. 540

Abbreviations

Bod du byung ba'i gsang sngags	Kun-bzang Nges-don Klong-yangs, Bod du byung ba'i gsang sngags snga 'gyur bstan 'dzin skyes mchog rim byon gyi rnam thar nor bu'i do shal.
dKar chag	Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas, Rin chen gter mdzod chen por ji ltar bzhugs pa'i dkar chag dang smin grol rgyab bsten dang bcas pa'i brgyud yig dngos sgo brgya 'byed pa'i lde'u mig.
gCod yul nyon mongs	Ngag-dbang bsTan-'dzin Nor-bu rDza-spru, gCod yul nyon mongs shi byed kyi bka' gter bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar byin rlabs gter mtsho.
gDams ngag mdzod	Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas, ed., gDams ngag mdzod.
gSan yig	Ngag-dbang Blo-bzang rGya-mtsho, gSan yig gan ga'i chu rgyun.
gTer rnam brgya rtsa	Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas, Zab mo'i gter dang gter ston grub thob ji ltar byon pa'i lo rgyus mdor bsdus bkod pa rin chen baidurya'i phreng ba.
Khrid brgya	Kun-dga' Grol-mchog, Jo nang zab khrid brgya rtsa brgyad.
Kong-sprul	Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas.
mKhyen-brtse	'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po.
Rin chen gter mdzod	Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas, ed., Rin chen gter mdzod.
Sa skya bka' 'bum	bSod-nams rGya-mtsho, ed., Sa skya bka' 'bum.
sGrub thabs kun btus	'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po and 'Jam-dbyangs Blo-gter dBang-po, ed. sGrub thabs kun btus.
sNga 'gyur byung tshul	bDud-'joms 'Jigs-bral Ye-shes rDo-rje, Gangs ljongs rgyal bstan yongs rdzogs kyi phyi ma snga 'gyur rdo rje theg pa'i bstan pa rin po che ji ltar byung

	ba'i tshul dag cing gsal bar brgod pa lha dbang gyul las rgyud ba'i rnga bo che'i sgra dbyangs.
Thang stong chos mdzod	Ri-ked Grub-thob Rinpoche, ed., _Grub mchog rgyal po thang stong pa'i zab gter chos mdzod rin po che_.
To.	Hakuji Ui, et al., _A Complete Catalogue of the Tibetan Buddhist Canons_.

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B-2: (Ri-khrod-pa) Nam-mkha' Legs-pa. *Grub chen thang stong rgyal po'i rnam thar gcod yul nyams bzhes.* In *Thang stong chos mdzod*, vol. 1, pp. 43-48; and in SP-2, vol. 1, p. 7.

B-3: (no title). In *dPal ldan shangs pa bka' brgyud kyi ngo mtshar rin chen brgyud pa'i rnam thar la gsol ba 'debs pa u dum ba ra'i phreng pa*, ed. Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas, in *gDams ngag mdzod*, vol. 8, pp. 726-729.

B-4: Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas. (no title). In *Zab mo'i gter dang gter ston grub thob ji ltar byon pa'i lo rgyus mdor bsdud bkod pa rin chen bai ḍūr ya'i phreng ba*, in *Rin chen gter mdzod*, ed. Kong-sprul Blo-gter mTha'-yas, vol. 1, pp. 539-542.

B-5: dKon-mchog dPal-bzang. *Bla ma thang stong rgyal po'i rnam thar gsal ba'i sgron me*. Manuscript.

The 'Gro don mkha' khyab ma Cycle

KKM-1: Thang-stong rGyal po. *'Gro don mkha' khyab ma*. Woodblock print. 1 folio.

KKM-2: *Grub pa'i dbang phyug thang stong rgyal po la thugs rje chen pos dngos su gnang ba'i snying po yi ge drug pa'i nyams len gyi gzhung gsal byed dang bcas pa*. In *sGrub thabs kun btus*, vol. Ga, pp. 17-37.

KKM-2-a) Kun-dga' Grol-mchog. (no title). pp. 18-21.

KKM-2-b) Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas. *Grub pa'i dbang phyug lcags zam pa chen po'i nye brgyud yi ge drug pa'i sgom lung 'bogs tshul gzhan phan mkha' khyab*. pp. 21-31.

KKM-2-c) Kong-sprul Blo-gros mTha'-yas. *Grub pa'i dbang phyug thang stong rgyal po'i nye brgyud thugs rje chen po'i sgom bzlas kyi ngag 'don mdo sngags yongs bcud*. pp. 31-35.

KKM-2-d) rJe grub thob chen po dge slong padma dkar por skye ba bzhes ba'i tshe 'phags pa spyan ras gzigs la gsol ba btab pa'i rdo rje'i gsung. pp. 35-37.

KKM-3: mKha'-khyab rDo-rje. Grub pa'i dbang phyug thang stong rgyal po'i nye brgyud phags mchogs spyan ras gzigs kyi bsgom bzlas 'gro don mkha' khyab ma'i zin bris nyung bsdus 'gro don char rgyun. Manuscript. dPal-spung edition. 22 folios.

KKM-4: sMan-sdong mTshams-pa Karma Nges-don bsTan-rgyas. Grub chen thang stong rgyal po'i 'gro don mkha' khyab ma maṇi'i sgom bzlas. In The Collected Works of sMan sdong mtshams pa Rin po che, vol. 3, pp. 433-484.

KKM-5: Blo-gter dBang-po. Grub chen thang rgyal lugs kyi thugs rje chen po'i maṇi ril sgrub gshan phan kun khyab. In Grub thabs kun btus, vol. Tha, pp. 590-603.

The Yi ge drug pa'i gsol 'debs Cycle

A-1: (no title) In Rin chen gter mdzod, vol. 37, pp. 1-19.

A-1-a) 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po. Thugs rje chen po yi ge drug pa'i gsol 'debs. pp. 1-8.

A-1-b) Padma Gar-dbang (Kong-sprul) Blo-gros mTha'-yas. Thugs rje chen po yi ge drug pa'i gsol 'debs sgrub thabs dang 'brel pa'i rig gtad chog mchog dman snying gi bdud rtsi. pp. 9-19.

A-2: Ngag-dbang bsTan-'dzin Nor-bu. Jo bo thugs rje chen po yi ge drug pa'i gsol 'debs sgrub thabs kyi khrid yig dri med 'od snang. Woodblock print. 56 folios.

The 'Chi med dpal ster Cycle

CM-1: bsTan-'dzin Ye-shes lHun-grub. Tshe sgrub nye brgyud kyi sgrub thabs chi med grub pa'i zhal lung. In sGrub thabs kun btus, vol. Pa, pp. 592-622.

CM-1-a) (same title as CM-1). pp. 593-599.

CM-1-b) Nye brgyud tshe grub kyi tshe 'gugs 'chi med 'od snang. p. 599.

CM-1-c) Nye brgyud tshe sgrub 'chi med dpal ster gyi dbang chog bdud rtsi'i chu rgyun. pp. 600-622.

CM-2: Nye brgyud tshe rta zung 'brel 'chi med dpal ster gyi sgrub

thabs dbang chog man ngag dang bcas pa. In sGrub thabs kun btus, vol. Ka, pp. 427-470.

CM-2-a) (no title). p. 428.

CM-2-b) Tshe sgrub nye brgyud 'chi med dpal ster. pp. 428-430.

CM-2-c) Kun-dga' bKra-shis. Bla ma zhi khro'i tshe sgrub dang tshe dbang bskur tshul gyi cho ga 'chi med rdo rje'i rgya mdud. pp. 430-449.

CM-2-d) 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po. Nye brgyud tshe rta zung 'brel gyi bsnyen sgrub las gsum gyi gsal byed snying por dril ba 'chi med dga' ston. pp. 449-465.

CM-2-e) Tshe sgrub nye brgyud kyi sgo nas brtan bzhugs 'bul pa'i cho ga nye bar bsdud pa 'chi med grub pa'i dga' ston. pp. 465-468.

CM-2-f) 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po. Nye brgyud tshe rta zung 'brel gyi brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs smon lam dang bcas pa 'chi med rdo rje'i glud dbyangs. pp. 468-470.

CM-3: Nye brgyud tshe rta zung 'brel gyi rgyun khyer shin tu bsdus pa 'chi med grub pa'i zhal lung. In Thang stong chos mdzod, vol. 4, pp. 629-651.

CM-3-a) 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dBang-po. Nye brgyud tshe rta zung 'brel 'chi med dpal ster gyi sgom bzlas rgyun khyer mdor bsdud. pp. 630-635.

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M-1-b) Blo-gter dBang-po. *Bram nag shan pa drug bskor gyi rjes gnang bdud dpung mthar byed*. pp. 339-349.

The Vajradhara Guruyoga

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V-3-c) Blo-gter dBang-po. (*mNyes byed mchod pa'i cho ga*). pp. 36-53.

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S-1-c) Grub chen thang stong rgyal po'i gsung mu ge'i 'jigs pa zhi ba'i gsol 'debs. pp. 4b-6b.

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GT-I-1-c) 'Gro 'dul 'phags pa'i sgrub thabs. pp. 480-487.

GT-I-1-d) rTa mchog rol pa'i sgrub thabs. pp. 487-501.

GT-I-1-e) rDo rje phag mo'i sgrub thabs. pp. 501-521.

GT-I-1-f) Kun gyi kha skong phrin las. p. 521-542.

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M-2-b) Klong gsal dgongs pa'i snying thig zab mo las thang stong bla sgrub sngags 'bum dkar po dgos 'byung nor bu'i gter mdzod. (Ngags 'bum dkar po). pp. 197-227.

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